

ULTIMATE GADGET GIFT GUIDE

Stuff

GADGETS / APPS / GEAR
SOUTH AFRICAN EDITION



**THE MOST
POWERFUL
IPHONE YET**
WE REVIEW
THE 6S PLUS

**FIFA 16 VS
PES 2016**
SQUEAKY
FUN TIME

**GET RICH
PLAYING
VIDEO
GAMES**

**HEAD
TO THE
Stuff
CHRISTMAS
WISH LIST!**

p113

GIFTS FOR GEEKS

OOH, WE'VE FELT YOUR PRESENTS

**95
BRILLIANT
IDEAS**

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Microsoft's bendy laptop
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1. Nikon CoolPix Camara R899 (91469, 91470) 2. Beats Headsets R6399 (91009,91010,91011) 3. iPhone 6 From R11799 (91218)
 4. Aspire Switch 10E R4999 (90353,90354,90355,9035,90357) 5. ClickTab 7 R999 (90836) 6. Xbox One 500GB Kinect R6699 (90932)
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WELCOME



This is traditionally the ed's letter that reflects on the highlights of the year ending and looks to those to come in the year ahead. But we won't bother with the reminiscences, because you've evidently been reading Stuff and know what tech delights 2015 had to offer.

As for 2016, we're hoping for cheaper drones and VR headsets, cheaper and more commonplace self-driving cars, and a phone that lasts a week. What? We're optimists, that's how we ended up in tech in the first place.

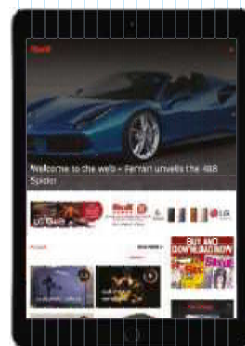
Until then, at least we've got the new **Star Wars** movie (p. 14) to look forward to, the new **Tesla Model X** (p. 12) to drool over, and **Bang & Olufsen's BeoLab 90** (p. 32) speaker to consider selling a kidney for.

In the unlikely event you've managed to avoid local shopping malls and their fixation with Boney M's yuletide album, may we remind you that the festive season is well and truly upon us? Don't panic! We've got you covered... twice. First with our comprehensive guide to **Gifts for Geeks** (p. 40) and then with our **Christmas Wish List** (p. 113).

We also take a look at some of the latest cycling innovations in **Geared Up** (p. 38) and the best in **smarthome wares** (p. 82).

In short, we've found all of the best things upon which to spend your 13th cheque. But don't despair, we've also found an unlikely way to make a fortune: **professional gaming** (p. 66). If you need us, we'll be shaking other peoples' presents and honing our *DOTA 2* skills.

Until next year, may your cables remain untangled and your data bundle never run out. **S**



THIS MONTH ON STUFF.CO.ZA

■ See **news**, **features** and read more **reviews** of the latest gadgets and much much more.



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... and a word about prices
Generally, we show the manufacturer's recommended price. Occasionally we (or suppliers) can make mistakes. Please remember that prices listed in Stuff are intended as a guide only. We make every effort to confirm that all information is correct (and triple checked) when we go to print.

REMEMBER, the next monthly issue is ON SALE 28 Dec

Stuff South Africa



haymarket

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TOP 10 OF EVERYTHING

Looking to buy something but need a bit of advice? Turn to our *Stuff Top Tens*: our expert listings of all gadgetry, from p101

NEW ENTRY



B&W P5 Series 2

★★★★★

Mucho audio in your ear-o's p111

H

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HOT
FOUR
#1

CORTANA'S SHINY NEW CONVERTIBLE

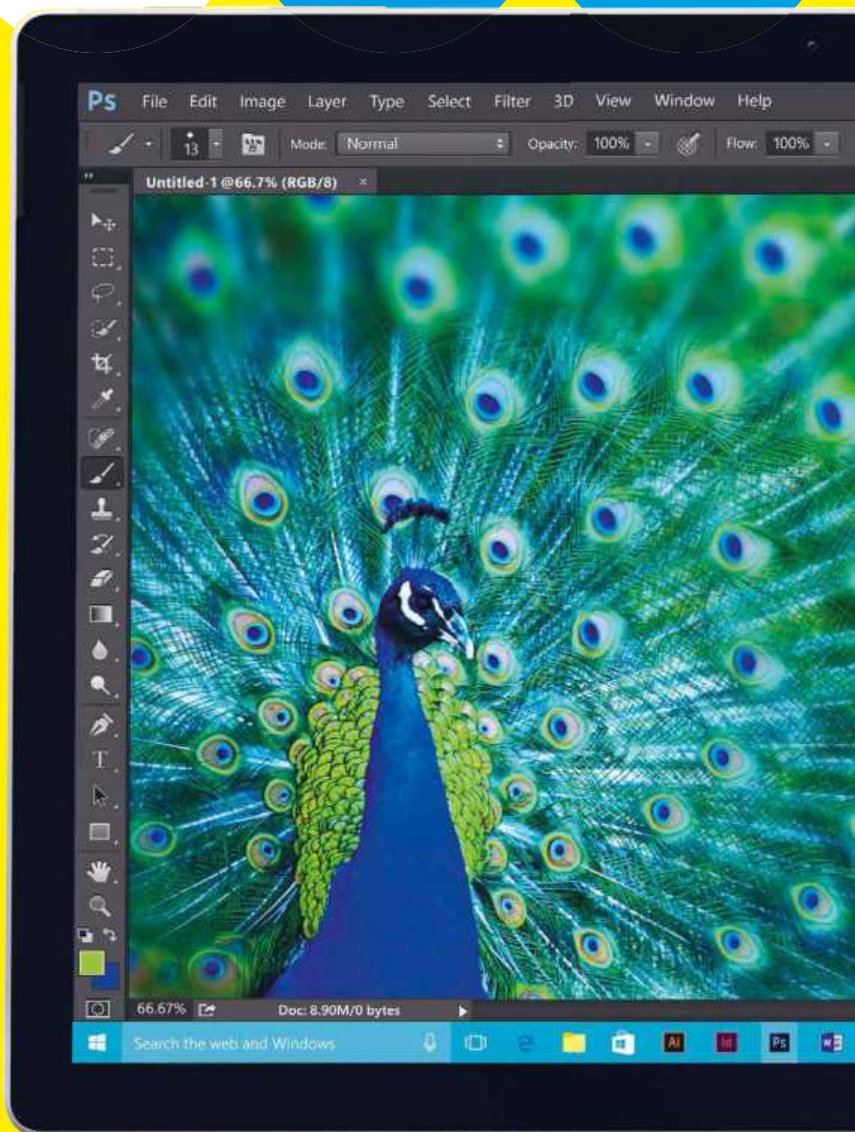
Microsoft Surface Book

It's strange to think that, despite having spent decades as one of the world's largest and most valuable tech companies, Microsoft has just made its first laptop.

In the past, companies like Lenovo and HP made the screens and keys while Microsoft made what was seen and typed into and clicked on. But after a faltering start, Microsoft's Surface tablets turned out to be actually pretty good, and then — with last year's *Stuff*-Award-winning Surface Pro 3 — really very good indeed.

Which is why we're really very excited about the Surface Book. Its 267ppi, 13.5in/34.3cm display is sharper than a MacBook Pro Retina, and it contains the sixth-gen Intel Core processor and battery it needs to work on its own as a tablet. The keyboard, though, is no mere peripheral. It contains powerful graphics hardware and yet more battery, enabling the conjoined pair — held together by 'Muscle Wire' locks — to work for 12 hours or more. A bendy 'dynamic fulcrum' hinge lets you fold the screen back on the keyboard, and you can draw or write with precision on the screen using the Surface Pen.

As hot as... throbbing Muscle Wire
Rtba/microsoft.com



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25 PAGES
OF THE BIGGEST
STORIES FROM
PLANET TECH



MORE MICRO-MANIA



MICROSOFT LUMIA 950/950 XL

Both these Windows 10 phones have 2560x1440 displays, 20MP cameras, 3GB RAM and 32GB storage plus microSD.

[Rtba](#)



MICROSOFT SURFACE PRO 4

The newest Surface gets a fingerprint sensor, Windows 10, larger screen, thinner chassis and more sensitive Pen stylus.

[Rtba](#)



MICROSOFT BAND 2

With Win 10 softening the hearts of naysayers, there'll be demand for this in-ecosystem fitness tracker, with a comfy curved screen and barometer.

[Rtba](#)





Wristy business

The Pebble Time Round comes in preconfigured colour combos of 14mm or 20mm strap widths. Gold, silver and black metal straps are "on the way".

HOT
FOUR
#2

WHAT OLD FATHER TIME GIVES TO LITTLE DAUGHTER TIME

Pebble Time Round

Imagine one hundredth of a Labrador, rolled flat and wrapped around your wrist. Horrific. But there's only one better way to experience the feeling of a smartwatch that weighs just 28g, and that's to try that watch for yourself. That watch is the new Pebble Time Round. It takes Pebble's familiar colour e-paper display, makes it round and attaches it to a thin, round watch — one with a choice of strap widths, and a rose gold colour option that highlights it as very much One For The Ladies. Pebble's oft-heralded week-plus battery life takes a hit in the featherweight Round, but it'll still last two days and it has a new 15min quick charge feature that'll give you a day's watchiness in the time it takes you heat up and inhale a breakfast McMuffin.

Ashot as... a microwaved sausage
R4 850 (import) / pebble.com

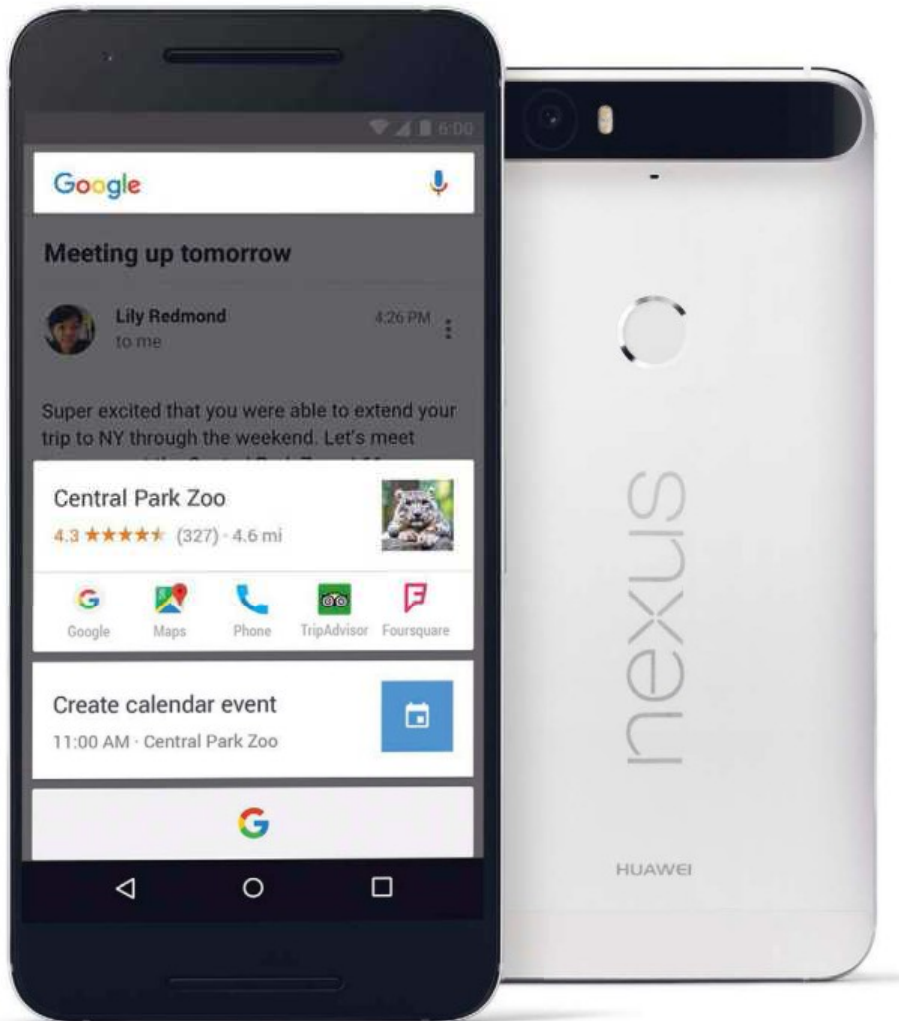
HOT
FOUR
#3YOU HAVE
PERMISSION TO
BE AWESOMISED

Google Android 6.0

Amazingly enough, the revelation that the 'M' in 'Android M' is to be 'Marshmallow' isn't the most exciting bit of the new OS launch. Well, it was temporarily, but as of now we're more interested in what the new OS will bring. And the answer is many things. There are mildly obvious upgrades, like homescreen rotation and the virtual plumbing for Android Pay using any device's fingerprint scanner. There are geeky love-ins, like the process of accepting or declining individual access permissions on an app-by-app basis (sounds dull, but it gives you power over the likes of Facebook so, uh, yep).

Then there are things that caused a murmur: apps and their data backing up automatically to Google Drive? Hmm. But as with most OS upgrades, it'll be the things you don't see that will make a big difference. Like the death of the 'Open in...' rigmarole, or seamless in-app Chrome tabs with full security and autofill. You'll just be happier with your phone, without really knowing why.

As hot as... a horizontal homescreen on your nightstand
Free / android.com



OH, THERE'S HARDWARE ALRIGHT



NEXUS 5X

LG's latest Android task was a follow-up to the Nexus 5. The specs are lower, but so is the price. So, plastic body, 5.2in/13.2cm 1080p screen, hexa-core Snapdragon 808. But it gets a fingerprint sensor and Marshmallow from the get-go.

R7700 (32GB) / store.orange.com/za



PIXEL C

Google's new supertab has a 10in/25.4cm 2K screen, an Nvidia Tegra X1 processor and USB-C.

A funky US\$150 keyboard dock puts this squarely in opposition to Apple's new iPad Pro, which will go on sale around the same time.
from \$500 (R6850) / pixel.google.com



NEXUS 6P

Huawei is your hardware partner for the bigger and more upmarket of the two new Nexuses. The body is aluminium, the 5.7in/14.5cm screen is 2K, the processor is Snapdragon 810 and the RAM is 3GB. Pretty, pretty fancy.

Rtba (32GB) / huawei.com

**She bangs,
she bangs**

Bang & Olufsen speakers are turning up on all sorts of HP kit and they're in full effect here, adding yet more width to the Envy's 34in screen. To experience the other extreme of B&O kit, turn to p32.

HOT
FOUR
#4

**MINESWEEPER,
IMAX EDITION**

**HP Envy Curved
All-In-One**

Your boss is annoyed with your bi-weekly reports being submitted in a super-wide landscape format. "Clive," she'll say. "It's great that you worked on this over the weekend, and we've all enjoyed hearing about your new PC." (There's a curious strangled noise from one of your colleagues behind you.) "That you had your choice of Core i5 or i7, 128GB SSD or 1TB hybrid drive, and that you went for the proper Nvidia GeForce graphics card over the integrated option. Fascinating. But has it occurred to you that one of the advantages of having 3440 pixels of screen width is that you can work on normal portrait documents, but side by side?" She fears change, you think to yourself as you massage your neck.

Ashot as... home-made red
cinema curtains
[Rtba / hp.com](#)





1946-2015

OVER 60 YEARS OF HISTORY REVISITED

The Heritage line represents the very essence of the TUDOR spirit and is the standard-bearer of its stylistic identity. Revisiting some of the most emblematic models in the history of the brand, it pays homage to its unique values and to more than six decades of rich heritage. The timekeepers in the Heritage line are not simply vintage re-issues. They are genuine reinterpretations in which past, present and future are combined. While retaining the original spirit, aesthetic codes and key characteristics of the historic models, TUDOR's Style Workshop places them at the very heart of the contemporary world, modernising them stylistically with small, subtle touches and adding new technical characteristics to optimise their performance. And so "tomorrow's icons" are born – modern classics, harmoniously combining form and function.

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TUDOR

SAFE AND FAST? X MARKS THE SPOT

Tesla Model X

R1.8 million (import) / teslamotors.com

The back doors only need 30cm of clearance to open. The driver's door also opens automatically when it senses you.



The groovy Falcon rear doors made it from concept to production, but will the Model X fly?

● **It won't fly.**

Elon Musk has manfully resisted the temptation to cross-pollinate the Model X SUV with his spaceship company SpaceX. Instead he seems hell-bent on being level-headed. Those sci-fi doors, which sense their surroundings and hinge open accordingly, are engineered for ease of access, not style. The wide, tall aperture they create simplifies getting babies (Musk rats?) into child seats,

while still getting adults into some of the other seven. The Model X will be safer than any big combustion engine SUVs, says Tesla, because of the lack of lump under the bonnet.

● **But it will be exciting.**

Strapped in your fam? Good, because like the Tesla Model S, the X is built on a base of batteries and boost: 0–100km/h in less than five seconds for the base 90D, dropping to a headline-grabbing 3.2secs in the more powerful P90D. The figures are remarkable given that the Model X is a very heavy, very big car. But less remarkable if you know about electric motor

torque and, given the SUV pretensions, the standard all-wheel drive. Range is likely to be about 400km. Even so, SA lacks any Supercharger stations, so getting one means risking a dead Tesla.

● **...and geeky.**

The 17in/43cm touchscreen of the Model S is inside, hurrah, and there's the expected cornucopia of steering assistance, braking assistance, parking assistance, etc. Large HEPA air filters promise "hospital levels of cleanliness", say Tesla. By which, hopefully, it means an operating theatre, not Joburg Gen's casualty waiting room on a Friday night after pay day.

**0-100KM/H IN
3.2 SECONDS IS
REMARKABLE
GIVEN THAT
THIS IS A
VERY HEAVY,
VERY BIG CAR**



MY OTHER CAR'S A...

● Honda 2&4

Looks like what Optimus Prime might blow out of his nose. An open-to-the-elements 405kg Ariel Atom rival, born out of a Honda internal competition to design a four-wheeler around the engine from a MotoGP bike.

Rtba / honda.com

● Jaguar F-Pace

Bentley's new Bentayga SUV is sold out already. And you saved up the cash, too. Luckily, Jaguar is introducing an SUV for the first time, and the BMW X3-sized F-Pace will take up less garage space.

Rtba / jaguar.com

● Porsche Mission E

Porsche's first all-electric supercar. Using tech from the Le Mans-winning 919 and the 918 Spyder road car hybrid, the Mission E claims 0-100km/h in 3.5secs, 600bhp and a range of over 480km.

Rtba (concept) / porsche.com



Canons to the right of them CANON POWERSHOT G9X

In the past if you wanted a small, powerful camera, you looked at the smaller end of the Canon/Nikon shelf. Now you have another five shelves to peruse, all heaving with Samsungs and Panasonic's and Sonys, tiny system cams with huge DSLR lenses. And yet this handsome little Canon still makes a lot of sense, with a 3in/7.6cm touchscreen and a handy controlling ring for its bright f2.0 zoom lens. The 1in/2.5cm, 20.2MP sensor gives it enough light-lapping power to take on many larger system cameras, but it is genuinely pocketable. If you're a more serious snapper with a thing for manual control dials, the new G5 X adds a nice electronic viewfinder for framing shots properly.

Rtba / canon.co.za



Headphones fit for David SENNHEISER ORPHEUS

Sennheiser is 70, and as befits such a distinguished anniversary it has revived the Orpheus name for this special headphones/amp combo. The base is made from the same Carrara marble that Michelangelo liked to use for his sculptures. Turn it on and, with gentle drama, the eight valves rise up out of the base and a box section opens to reveal the headphones themselves. Enthralled? That's where the show ends, as details about the headphones are being kept under strict lock and key for now. Expect human-ear-baffling frequency response, a five-figure pricetag and to not see them in Game. Followed by, hopefully, the tech they use filtering down to a more sensible level.

Rtba / sennheiser.com

I find your lack of suitcase disturbing

SAMSONITE STAR WARS ULTIMATE COLLECTION

This set of matched bags from Samsonite is like a toy train set: intended for kids but Dad is going to wind up playing with it. You can now have Anakin Skywalker, in his guise as Darth Vader, watching over all your stuff. And your Darth-bag comes in various sizes, from the dinky little pencil case to the wheeled backpack, for the Jedi who doesn't feel like using the Force to cart his gear around.

from R400 / samsonite.co.za



I am here to put you back on schedule

CLICTIME LEGO YODA/DARTH ALARM CLOCK

Keep either the wisdom of Yoda or the power of Vader on your bedside with the Clictime Lego Alarm Clock. What is it? A 9.5-inch/24cm Lego figurine incorporating a digital LCD alarm clock, with a snooze function, constructed from ABS plastic and the oversized Lego figures are fully poseable. As far as you can pose a Lego figure. Get one of each and get started on that diorama you've been secretly wanting to build. Just us? Okay then, forget we said anything.

R480 / thegadgetshop.co.za

For the young Padawan on his path to true Jedi-hood

DISNEY INFINITY 3.0: STAR WARS - STARTER PACK

Disney Infinity is designed to suck the money from your wallet: editions for all the major consoles, collectible figurines that function as game pieces in a digital world, backwards compatibility with old editions and now the Star Wars starter pack for Infinity 3.0. The basic package arrives with *Star Wars: Twilight of the Republic*, figures of Ahsoka Tano and Anakin Skywalker (the young one) – splurge on the *Special Edition* and you also get the *Rise Against the Empire* play area, Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia and Boba Fett figures. Goodbye wallet, it was nice knowing you.

from R770 / awx.co.za





The droid you're looking for

R2D2 MOVING REFRIDGERATOR

We want this little remote controlled refrigerator. We cannot begin to explain how complete it would make our lives to have a bleeping, moving, rotating-headed little R2D2 of our very own bringing us drinks while we watch the dedicated *Star Wars* channel on DStv this December. It's got a two-hour battery, enough space for a handful of cans and did we mention that it's life-sized? But then there's the price, which is enough to purchase a new entry-level car. Perhaps this isn't actually the droid we were looking for...

R105 000 (import) / otakumode.com

WTF? Imposter! This is the real R2D2

As though a million notes
were jotted, then erased

MOLESKINE STAR WARS LIMITED EDITION COLLECTION

The new episode of the *Star Wars* trilogy (3 x 3 films) might have set a new record for the most varied licensed content, with Moleskine's 2016 *Star Wars* collection riding high in the desirability stakes. Stormtrooper, R2D2, the Fett or Kylo Ren are your options from Moleskine's new limited edition lineup. We can't do without our 12-month daily planner and droid companion, ourselves.

from R340 / moleskine.com



If you want to be a Knight of the Old Republic...

SONY PLAYSTATION 4 1TB LIMITED DARTH VADER EDITION

Now is a great time for a *Star Wars* fan to jump into Sony's PlayStation 4 ecosystem, with the etched Darth Vader special edition console hitting the market this month. It's not alone, the bundle comes with a Vader-branded gamepad and the excellent-looking *Star Wars: Battlefront*. It almost overshadows the bundle pricing and the fact that you're doubling up on storage from the launch PlayStation 4.

R7 000 / takealot.com

START MENU

The latest startups, crowdfunded projects and plain crazy ideas

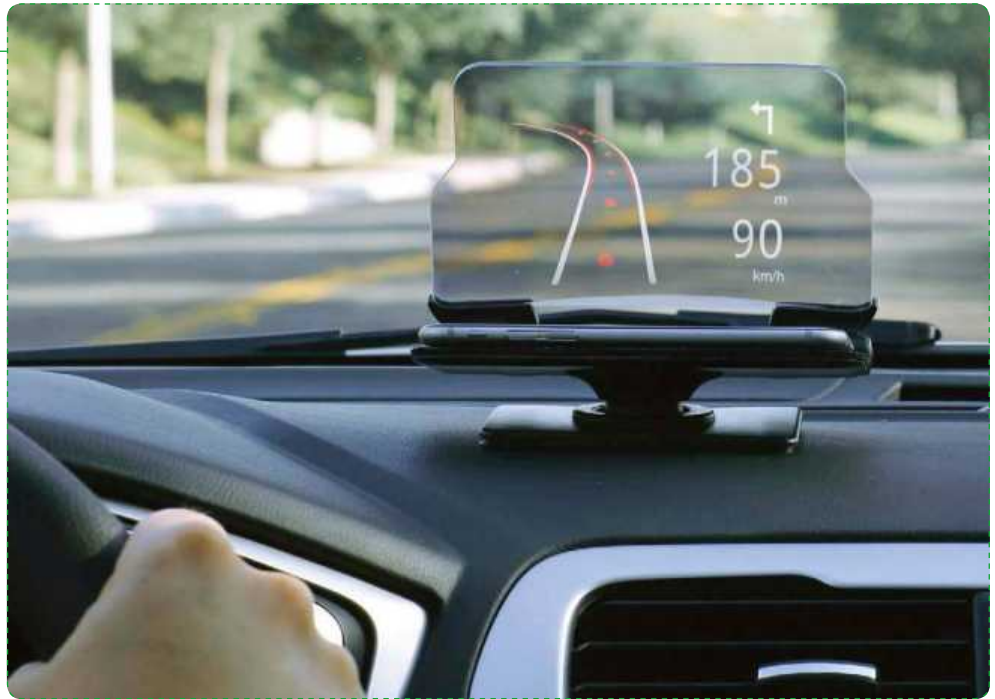
KICK-STARTER

Good reflections HUDWAY GLASS

The Hudway Glass is a highly affordable heads-up display for your car. Instead of adding another layer of tech – like Garmin's electronic heads-up device – it just uses ol' mother physics. You put your phone on the Glass's slip-free tray, where it reflects off the panel above. Simple. The company is coding a GPS app and an informatics app to use with it. (You can't, of course, just use any GPS app because it needs to be mirror-reversed on the phone screen.)

To be honest, though, our favourite thing about this is that it forces you to put your phone away up front where it can't distract you from driving.

\$50 / hudwayglass.com



BACK IT

STACK IT

SACK IT

KICK-STARTER

INDIE-GOGO

KICK-STARTER

KICK-STARTER



Hey, cool tent SIESTA4

Tents aren't best suited to festivals, really. No bathroom. But mainly because, once the sun comes up (ie: the time for festival goers to go to sleep), they quickly become too bright and hot. The Siesta4 has heat- and light-reflecting material, plus USB-powered fans. Bit pricey and vandal-attracting for Oppikoppi, though.

from \$315 / outbacklogic.com



The necks big thing TINSEL

If you're a tech company and you want women to hate you, it's easy: just roll out a smaller, pinker version of a device you already make, and call it the Girl Edition. These wired Tinsel earphones are a more subtle sell: when not in use, they click together into a necklace. Which is pretty cool, if you like wearing the same necklace every day.

from \$150 / tinsel.me



Layering schmayering RAVEAN C6 HEATED JACKETS

Ravean are railing against the idea that heated jackets are bulky and inefficient. Which is quite a mountain to climb. But its heated hoodie, down jacket and gloves do look pretty snazzy, with 5V or 12V heating options and phone charging from the same battery. Hefty pre-order discounts, too.

from \$90 / ravean.com



Gram slam WEIGH TO FLY

At first glance, this might be shopping channel junk. But bear with us. It's a luggage scale that you place under your suitcase, showing a readout on your phone as you pack, including itself in the sums. It doubles as a clothes hanger and triples as a proximity alarm in case you walk away without your case. Come on! Useful, no?

£70 / weigh-to-fly

htc one M9

let them
stare



live in style

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make some noise

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epic everything

Get more detail with an UltraPixel™ selfie camera and 20MP back camera.

make it personal

Express yourself with new ways to personalise your phone.

#HTCOneLifeSA

 HTC South Africa

 @HTCSouthAfrica



Wanna go get high?

TWELVE SOUTH HIRISE DELUXE

You don't realise how badly you wanted to get high until you've actually used Twelve South's HiRise for the iPhone 6s/6s Plus. Working with a Lightning charge cable to turn the stylish pedestal into a charging stand for your iPhone (or iPad, let's be fair), you'll always know where your device is. And it'll always be charged. And when your Macbook starts ringing before your phone does, you'll be more easily able to stab the screen to answer that important Facetime call. Best of all, you won't even have to hold your phone to take it.

R900 / takealot.com

Not suitable for spies

GRIFFIN LIGHTRUNNER ARMBAND

We all know that you have a secret jogging habit. If only you could get out of the house when the neighbours aren't looking.

Once you're on the road, however, you want to keep your iPhone somewhere safe. So why not let that 'somewhere safe' keep you a little safer. The Griffin LightRunner is your standard running armband, designed to fit a new iPhone 6s – or an Android sized 4.7in/12cm or under – which incorporates LEDs which can be tweaked for better visibility. Thus making you more visible on the road in low-light conditions while also making it harder to sneak out past your neighbours.

R750 / digicape.co.za



The new all-in-one

OUTDOOR TECH BUCKSHOT PRO

Smartphone plus external speaker equals a mini-party, most of the time. But why stop there when you can pair your mobile with a multi-function, highly-portable add-on? The Outdoor Tech Buckshot Pro lives up to the second and fourth words in its name admirably, by being a – deep breath – shock-resistant, water-resistant (IPX5) Bluetooth-enabled speaker, torch, power bank, and handlebar light for your bicycle. Should you happen to have a bicycle along on this smartphone survivalist course you seem to have embarked on.

R1450 / outdoortechology.co.za





Oh, HTC, is it? You'd better come in **HTC ONE A9**

We recently got our hands on HTC's One M9+, the supercharged version of the M9. "Five stars," we said, and begged HTC to bring it to SA. But it has not. We have not huffed, however; just gone off and pointedly played very loudly with some other phones. Now they're waving this about — are we bothered? Yes. For one, despite being a different family to the M9+, this will be one of the first non-Nexus phones to get Android's Marshmallow OS. It's a sleek, rounded design — not dissimilar to an iPhone 6 — with a 5in/12.7cm 1080p screen, 13MP rear camera and Qualcomm Snapdragon 617 octa-core processor with 2GB RAM. Not a Samsung S6 smasher, then...but we're more than a bit interested.

[Rtba / htc.com/za](#)



Eyes that pop out of their sockets **LOGITECH CIRCLE**

It's post-heist debrief time, and Fingers McMullen has the conch. "I'm sorry the results were sub-optimal, guys. But you all saw the intel, right?" He flicks his pointer around the floorplan. "The cameras were supposed to be here, here and here. But they weren't. Hiro, what have you found out?" Chief technical officer Hiro Ito spins his VR goggles around and makes the 'brain splode' hand gesture. "Super-high-tech gear. A type of home security cam called the Logitech Circle. Motion detection, HD footage to your phone, daily resume — all that jazz. But here's the thing that ended us: you can take it off the cradle and it'll stream off its battery for three hours. Wherever. You. Leave. It. We've been outplayed."

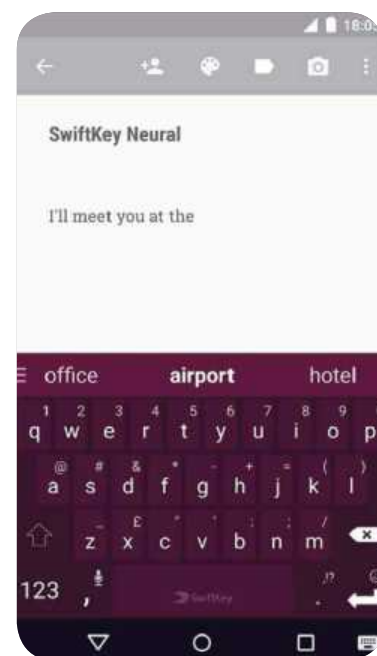
[Rtba / logi.com](#)



📱 DROP EVERYTHING & DOWNLOAD

SwiftKey Neural Alpha Free / Android

Just seeing the phrase 'Successfully installed SwiftKey Neural Alpha' is enough to make you feel like a character in a William Gibson book. Then there's the fact that, following the Google Deep Dream craze, everyone now associates a neural network with things composed almost entirely of eyes and dog parts. Which is a surreal thing to think is happening inside your phone. And lastly, while SwiftKey Neural is claimed to take word prediction to a higher, more context-aware level, it really just suggests the right thing almost all of the time. Which is what the non-neural version was/is considered amazing for doing. So it's a win-win-win. Download immediately! (iOS users: you made your choice.)





SPACE ROCKS

Tenacity comes as standard in the world of the conspiracy theorist. But even the remaining 'faked moon landings' faithful must surely be swayed by the more than 8000 high-res images just uploaded to NASA's Flickr feed ([flickr.com/photos/projectapolloarchive/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/projectapolloarchive/)). Every photo from the Apollo program is now freely browsable and downloadable. Once you've got to the umpteenth photo of a rock you'll think as we did: "You know what? They definitely did go. And I bet they would have loved to have had the Russians along, to help with the rock photography schedule."

NEWS FEED



NICE VIEW OF THE GALAXY

Samsung's 18.4in/46.7cm Galaxy View is coming along nicely. At the time of writing it's still a mirage but you might even be reading these pages on its HD display by the time this issue hits shelves. Or binge-watching Netflix, more likely.



FACEBOOK DISLIKES DISLIKE BUTTON

Facebook has revealed a series of emojis called Reactions that can be clicked on instead of the Like button. Irish and Spanish users are trialling the update. In other over-sharing news, Twitter is said to be considering ditching the 140-character limit.



THE HYPERLOOP: COMING SOON

Elon Musk's futuristic transportation concept, based around the idea of a vacuum tube (but a lot faster) is going to happen. There's a prototype being constructed, which should be working by May 2016, which will see unmanned pods speeding around at up to 1255km/h. Humans will travel at 260km/h, sadly.

THE CAMERA THAT LETS YOU DO THE FLYIN'

DJI Osmo

R11000 / smashtronics.co.za

Worried that all these dronecams are going to stop you using your jetpack? Say hi to Osmo.

● **Maybe it's the red tape...**

Watching the legal eagles sticking their beaks into all aspects of personal and commercial drone flying, you can imagine DJI being keen to launch a camera that doesn't need a licence. Or, more likely, it's seen the opportunity to get its camera and stabilising gimbal tech into people's hands for a reasonable price. Either way, the Osmo is DJI's 4K Zenmuse X3 camera, sitting on top of a three-axis gimbal, sitting on top of a handheld control stick. Tripod and accessory mounts, extension arms and a bike mount give you shooting options if you need your hands free. Those jetpacks don't fly themselves.

● **It's top quality.**

You can buy a naked Osmo and mount any of DJI's cameras, but the one that comes bundled here has a 1/2.3in Sony Exmor R CMOS sensor coupled to a 20mm, f/2.8 lens with a 94° field of view. Video quality options are comprehensive: 4096x2160 4K at 24fps or 3840x2160 4K at 30fps; plus up to a slow-mo-tastic 120fps in 1080p. Stills are 12MP, and DJI points out that the gimbal stabilisation lets you take creative long-exposure shots with the camera held in your wobbly hand.

● **Enjoy direct directing.**

Controls on the pole let you take advantage of the motors in the gimbal. There's an auto photo panorama mode, for example. But you can also manually control the camera – you are the drone now, after all. But if you insist: –35° to 135° tilt, 320° of pan and –50° to 90° of roll are all under your thumb. If you can do that and still shoot straight while, say, riding on the back of a dolphin, we will buy you a drink. (A safe bet for us: the Osmo isn't waterproof.)

There's a stereo mic built in to Osmo, but also a 3.5mm jack for an external one.

WE'VE SEEN GOPRO FANS WITH HANDHELD GIMBALS, BUT THE OSMO IS THE FIRST ONE-BOX OPTION





Without all the bits of metal stuck in your face

SKULLCANDY SHRAPNEL

Looks like something that a Fender enthusiast would wear on their keys, right? The Skullcandy Shrapnel is more than just a novelty fob though, it's a hardened splashproof Bluetooth speaker with a 10-hour battery life. Connections are wireless or through cable and users can also take calls on the speaker – there's a mic included for precisely that purpose. Personally, we'd connect the aux cable and pretend our phones are teeny electric guitars as the tunes blast out – but that's just us.

R900 / luksbrands.co.za

An Apple TV worth the update

NEW APPLE TV

We've been waiting for an Apple TV. That is, a television made by Apple. But this will do for now. This update of Apple's streaming box comes with a new Siri Remote with a Touch surface for navigation. And gaming. Did we mention that gaming's a thing? Siri can help you search – yay, voice control – and there's improved hardware all round. Must be why it's heavier than the last one. As expected, it'll play very nice with all of Apple's devices and services – and most other wireless devices.

From R2 500 (32GB) / istoreonline.co.za



FUTURE STUFF 3D-PRINTED SNEAKERS

Stuff dreams of shoes fit for print

We've yet to see a 3D printer in every home... wait, that should read "We've yet to see a 3D printer in any home." Still, the prospects for the technology continue to be interesting.

Eric Sprunk, Nike's COO, recently waxed lyrical at a GeekWire summit about a future in which customers can 3D print their own trainers. Sprunk described how customers could purchase printing files from Nike's website for home printing, or failing that, head down to a Nike store where it would

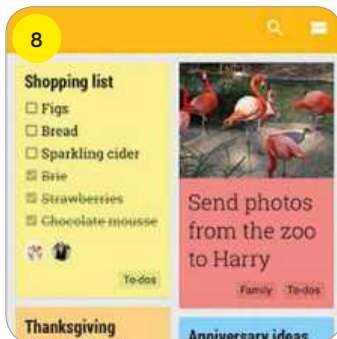
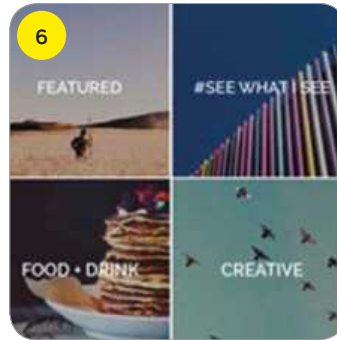
be printed out for you. Quick as a flash, Adidas announced that very thing: Futurecraft 3D is a sneaker with a 3D-printed midsole – "a flexible, fully breathable carbon copy of the athlete's own footprint". The proprietary process, developed with Materialise, involves a bunion-mapping run on a treadmill. It's still at concept stage but is, according to Adidas's Eric Liedtke, "a statement of intent".

The upper parts and rubber sole of the shoe would still have to be mated with the printed midsole, which is a bummer. Our own

custom-runners dream sees us hobbling into the shop on shredded sneakers then bouncing out a few minutes later, good for another few hundred kilometres.

Back to Nike, whose Flyknit sneakers are already forged almost entirely by a machine that follows instructions to literally knit the footwear together. If that process and the creation of the midsole could be combined, we'd be close to having our future-pump dreams realised. Which, given the state of our knees, can't come soon enough.

This month's mobile must-downloads



1 Mini Motor Racing WRT

Free / iOS, Android

Ah, *Micro Machines*, how fondly we remember thee! Although, looking back at screenshots from the '90s, you were a bit rubbish. We'll take this modern top-down racer instead, even with its freemium nonsense.

2 AmpMe

Free / iOS, Android

Here's an intriguing idea. AmpMe lets you group together the tinny speakers on several smartphones to make one synced tinny cacophony. It only works with SoundCloud; more services to follow.

3 BlockQuest

Free / iOS, Android

A familiar graphics style – *Crossy Road*, anyone? – doesn't detract from this being a madcap RPGer. Not one for turn-based strategists, though: you're moving and puzzle-solving against the clock.

4 Mozilla Firefox

Free / Android

The latest Firefox for Android adds a couple of niceties like improved tabs and bookmark management as well as multi-platform sync. In the next update, we're promised unrivalled privacy settings.

5 Pac-Man Bounce

Free / iOS, Android

Our beloved pixel-muncher is kind of borrowed for this only slightly *Pac-Man* puzzler. Align the bounce pads to make him change direction, clearing each level of stars while avoiding mishaps and miscreants.

6 Steller

Free / iOS

If lobbing a bunch of photos onto Facebook doesn't feel like enough narrative of your trip, Steller is an app that lets you quickly create an onscreen photobook. The new version is streamlined and tweaked.

7 Murder

Free / iOS, Android

We're looking forward to playing this cyberpunk point-and-click adventure. It's set in Tokyo so we should probably stop pronouncing it 'moider' like we're some kind of noirish New York detective. Moider.

8 Google Keep

Free / iOS

Imagine 'Wait for iOS version' was a to-do list item in our Android phone's Google Keep app. And now imagine us prodding the check box... on an iOS device! Done. (Why do we have two phones?)

9 Dead Zone: Zombie War Deluxe

Free / Android

You're going to have to be an awfully big fan of zombie games to endure the painfully translated text of this undead-flummoxing strategy romp.

NOT JUST AN APP

iRIG KEYS

from R2 000 / iOS, Android, PC, Mac



There are so few on-the-move opportunities for sparkly-fingered ivory-ticklers.

Unless, of course, you routinely travel with a piano, which must get to be a real bore after a while. Our friends at IK Multimedia, fortunately, continue to persevere at their lot in life, which is the easy connection of musical instruments to phones and tablets. (They, you'll recall, are the makers of the iRig guitar adaptor.) And now they've re-released the iRig Keys (R2 000) and iRig Keys Pro (R2 260) portable controller keyboards. Both now come with an Android-compatible microUSB-OTG cable, giving you yet more ways to roll out your heartstring-twang version of *Candle In The Wind*.



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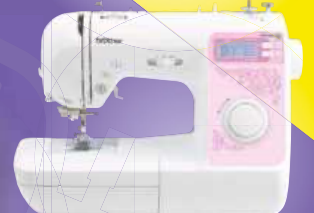
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DUE
FEB

FIRST LOOK FAR CRY PRIMAL PS4, Xbox One, PC

In recent years, the *Far Cry* series has done a fine job of taking gamers on semi-regular holidays to tropical locations. Sure, you often find yourself fighting off vicious honey badgers with your bare hands, or accidentally joining an armed rebellion against a warlord, but that's just part of living like a local, right?

But Ubisoft's latest excursion isn't just in a different continent, it takes place in an entirely different time. *Primal* is set in the Mesolithic period of around 10,000BC, where it's sabretooth

tigers and woolly mammoths you have to worry about, not some pesky woodland critter (although admittedly one with a very bad temper).

That means your position on the food chain is far more precarious than normal, as you'll have to hunt to survive, using whatever primitive weaponry you can craft from foraged wood, stones and bits of old bone. It's a long way from the rocket launchers you used to conquer Kyrat in *FC4*.

You play as Takkar, the only surviving member of a clan,

which makes you an easy target for other tribes looking to nick all the stuff you've hoarded.

If previous *Far Cry* games are anything to go by, you'll probably find yourself dabbling in the supernatural, although with the internal combustion engine and even the bicycle still a few thousand years from being invented, it'll be interesting to see how Ubisoft deals with traversing the land of Oros's high peaks and vast forests without vehicular assistance. But then that's all in a day's work for a Stone Age homo sapiens.



FIRST PLAY

DARK SOULS 3

PS4, Xbox One, PC

Good news for masochists: punishing RPG *Dark Souls* is back for another instalment of teeth-gnashing swordplay – and we've been hacking (and dying) our way through a few of its notoriously tough baddies.

The classic gameplay – block, dodge, slash, die – has had a few tweaks. Heavy attacks now land more quickly, making them more viable and ever so slightly lowering the skill bar – but that's not to say every encounter won't put you through the wringer.

What will be welcome for less adept players is the way it rewards experimentation. After repeatedly being skewered like an armour-clad kebab by a nasty knight, leading him into the path of a fire-breathing dragon proved vital in disposing of him, as did attacking a demon mid-transformation. Whether the same lateral thinking works against the bosses remains to be seen.

In spite of the thorough pasting received during our time with it, *Dark Souls 3* is shaping up to be a very satisfying mountain to climb – as long as you're prepared to die over and over and over again.

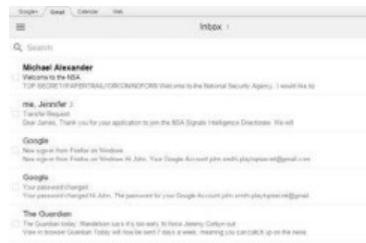


CAMPAIGNING FOR YOUR KICKSTARTER CASH



HOME FREE PS4, PC, MAC

Recent simulator games have allowed us to experience life as a goat, a rock and a slice of bread, but the one we've all been clamouring for is finally coming. *Home Free* is a stray dog sim. You can steal food from humans, do tricks to impress them, forage in bins in procedurally generated streets, and fight for territory with other hounds.



TOP SECRET EMAIL

Edward Snowden's exposure of the NSA's spying isn't the first thing you'd think to make a game about, but then you could've said the same about passport control and look at *Papers, Please*. *Top Secret* involves you sending actual emails in real time, in an attempt to find out who's leaking documents to the press.



FRIDAY THE 13TH PS4, XBOX ONE, PC

This has been given a Hollywood boost by snaring the official licence to feature iconic movie baddie Jason Voorhees. You'll play as either the madman himself, or one of the seven naive teens he's trying to turn into mincemeat, in *Evolve*-style multiplayer chases around Camp Crystal Lake.



INCOMING

JANUARY

● LEGO MARVEL'S AVENGERS

FEBRUARY

● BATTLEBORN

● MIRROR'S EDGE CATALYST

● DEUS EX: MANKIND DIVIDED

● XCOM 2

MARCH

● TOM CLANCY'S THE DIVISION

● UNCHARTED 4: A THIEF'S END

LIMITED BADDIES, ENDLESS PRETTINESS

Jolly old London is a lot jollier with knuckle-dusters

As a franchise *Assassin's Creed* has done some amazing things over the years. From the outset the idea has been to recreate historically accurate, open worlds set in the past, and then drop players into incredible locations and let them run amok. It's brilliant, and I'd argue it's the best thing about the games.

We've had Damascus and Jerusalem during the Third Crusade, Venice and Florence during the Renaissance, New York, Nassua in the Caribbean in full pirate mode, and now — finally — in *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate*, Victorian era London.

The franchise has always featured a good mix of combat and stealth, and was one of the primary proponents of the open-world, parkour-gaming mechanism we've seen many people incorporate into other titles since. You know, scaling buildings with your bare hands, sneaking about, and dropping in on groups of baddies to kick some ass.

As excited as I was to get a copy of *AC:Syndicate* from Stuff HQ I should preface this by confessing I'm not an *Assassin's Creed* core fan, so please bear

that in mind if you are, and hear me out while I do my best to tell you honestly what I think of your game.

First off, it is absolutely, jaw-droppingly beautiful. Truly. I was utterly astonished with the detail and the modeling and the whole look and feel of it. London looks incredible. I also spent some time living there, so I'm familiar with where what is, and I can't tell you how much fun it was wandering from Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament over the bridge toward Waterloo, and then down the South Bank toward The City of London and St Paul's.

AC's London is very convincing, though perhaps a little cleaner than it probably would have been. Oh, and they did cheat a little with the amount of glorious blue sky and sunshine in the game. But we'll excuse that for the dramatic visuals it allows for.

Once I got over how beautiful everything was, however, and I got into the gameplay properly, I started to notice the holes. Missions come in one of only three or so flavours. Sneak into that square building, kill that guy, free those kids. Go over there, kidnap that person, put them in a

carriage, and ride around the corner. Fight this group of people.

Once you're done doing that in one borough, you move on to the next one and repeat the process. Even the climbing has been nerfed with the addition of a Batman-esque rope gun, so gone is the challenge of finding a route up something.

There are also only about three models for your enemies. As a result, I've killed the same poor bald guy, and his friend with a hat, about a thousand times now. In the same way. Over and over and over. I lost interest. I'm bored. I'm not prepared to do the same things in such limited ways for another 20 hours.

But there is good stuff, especially if you're a fan. The fans I've spoken to absolutely love *AC:Syndicate*. One even called it "the best *AC* game since *Brotherhood*". The combat system is much better and builds on the best gameplay improvements from previous editions. And it's also super-pretty, did I mention that?

Syndicate may be the best *Assassin's Creed* game yet. Assuming you like that sort of thing, that is.



SPIN DOCTOR

Rob Forbes is a 5FM DJ who tweets about football, sports and music when he's not presenting, camped out in a casino waiting for people to let go of a car (long story) or raiding Stuff's storage cupboard. Catch him on 5FM between 13:00 and 16:00 every weekday.



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? WTF IS THE LIGHT L16?

Must. Find. Pattern.

Annoying, isn't it? You probably spotted pretty quickly that those are camera lenses, but before your modern brain even asked why there are so many of them, your primal brain cried out at the randomness of their placement. And then your modern brain said it's something to do with how it works. And then this other brain, put there by the government, suggested it's to do with their physical layout on the device's PCB. And you were like, *who said that?*

Quite. So why all the lenses?

Sixteen! The aim of the L16 is to capture DSLR-like quality photos, but in a form factor that can easily slip into your pocket. The lenses have different focal lengths from 35mm to 150mm. Combined into one shot by clever software, the resulting image is a whopping 52MP of detail; but cleverer yet is the ability to change the focus point of the image, Lytro-style.

They all look quite tiny, though.

Low-light shooting is also taken care of by the software, which decides the best combination of lenses for the light reading and sorts the final exposure using wizardry. At this point, camera purists will be screaming their safe word and running for their lens cupboard just to be reassured by some big bits of light-loving glass.

Yeah, the L16's probably not for those guys.

No, indeed — a point further reinforced by the device's lack of physical controls. Only the shutter release button is 'real'. Everything else is handled by the on-screen touchscreen controls. It must be the devil's work.

So, DSLR quality claimed. DSLR price demanded?

Yep. Early birds can reserve one for R17 800 until 6 November, after which the price will shoot up to R23 300. It won't be out until next summer, mind you, so if you're probably in the 'many lenses do not make light work' camp, it might be safer to wait for the reviews.



Four legs good again SAMSUNG SERIF

The other night, when you woke up for seemingly no good reason... it was the globe-spanning 'crunk' of a completed revolution. The moment when TVs went from boxes on legs to tabletop stands to wall-mounted slivers and now back to boxes on legs. Samsung's new Serif TV, co-created by French designers Ronan and Erwan Bouroullec, is destined to stand on its own four legs and serve as a definite object in the room. You can even, horror of horrors, put things on top of it. There'll be three models — a 4K 40in/101.6cm, a 1080p 32in/81.3cm and a 720p 24in/61cm — and if you were to put us in a corner and force an opinion out of us, we'd have to say that we rather like it.

from R10 500 (import) / samsung.com

The Iron 883 benefits from a new rolled leather seat: comfortable rebellion for all.



A bike called dignity HARLEY-DAVIDSON IRON 883

'Mid-life crisis' is the phrase that leaps to the lips of people upon hearing that you've bought a Harley-Davidson. We disagree. A mid-life crisis would be submitting yourself to the arrogant salesmen and cackling groupies in the showrooms of Ducati, Yamaha and Honda. H-D shop staff, on the other hand, are more likely to treat you with some dignity, knowing that you're just a normal person who wants to get some flies on your teeth. And while Harleys can be pricey, this entry-level Iron gets new adjustable suspension and lighter wheels for 2016, with bags of character for not much cash. To hell with the naysayers.

from R106 000 / hdavidson.co.za



HUAWEI Mate S



Touch. Made Powerful.

MAKE IT POSSIBLE
consumer.huawei.com/za



Product colour, shape and interface are for reference only.
The actual product may vary. UI functions and applications may vary by region.

BANG & OLUFSEN BEOLAB 90

R570 000 (import) / bang-olufsen.com

Those speakers are so disarmingly directionless.

Don't you think the Daleks would have been a lot more creepy if they didn't have an obvious front? If they were just a bobbly cylinder, from which death might emanate at any point? But knowing that humans have a basic need for things to have a front, the BBC's effects wizard gave the Daleks a snouty 'face' to relate to. It's the same reason that speaker

manufacturers, for eons, have been making speakers with an obvious direction: to alleviate nightmares. Although it might also be something to do with sound.

Probably. But that doesn't seem to have bothered B&O.

Very little bothers the king of Scandinavian audio. Especially in its 90th anniversary year, the culmination of which is this celebratory wants-for-nothing

BeoLab 90 digital uber-speaker. It weighs about as much as a motorbike and underneath that deliberately directionless design lie 18 speaker drivers, facing every which way but loose. Complex software measures the room that the speaker is in and adjusts the output to suit. You can also make use of 'beam width control' to adjust whether you want a traditional hi-fi audio sweet spot or all-encompassing party sound.

Ain't no-one doing no partying near my R500k speakers.

Speaker, singular. That price tag is 'per unit'. But there's a whole load of tech on board to justify its cost. As well as a huge amount of digital amplification, each speaker has RCA, XLR, USB and digital optical connections hidden behind one of the oak panels. High-res audio up to 24-bit/192kHz is supported, naturally. Might we suggest, as a kick-off, Orbital's *Doctor*?

THIS IS BANG & OLUFSEN'S
90TH BIRTHDAY
PRESENT TO ITSELF



This bowl of GoPro is just right GOPRO HERO+

Ah, the old Goldilocks movement – we've all been caught out by it. First, GoPro launched the baby of the affordable Hero range, with no screen and no wireless. Then a tiny bit later it launched the daddy of the range, the Hero+ LCD. And now, when we've all swung one way or the other, GoPro meekly drops the middle guy: the Hero+. It doesn't have the LCD screen, but it does have Wi-Fi and Bluetooth for footage sharing and camera control. And it gets a spec upgrade over the basic Hero: the Hero+ has 1080p/60fps and 8MP stills. Just right, assuming there's still anyone left to buy one.

R4 000 / activegear.co.za



The big hand is pointing to the... time KLOKERS KLOK-01

Rule-busting is what got this ragtag species of ours where it is. We're not suggesting that making the numbers go around the hands is the kind of revolution that will advance humanity, but its slide-rule aesthetic sure is pretty. The Kickstarted KLOK-01 also adheres to the current trend of being able to pop off its strap in seconds. Where you put the battery-powered, waterproof watch part next is up to you: Kloklers will sell you other coloured straps or a watch chain or, soon, a desk stand. But put it wherever. There are no rules. And we wouldn't have it any other way, right?

R5 300 (import) / kloklers.com



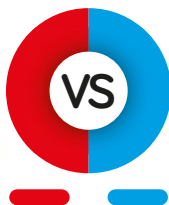
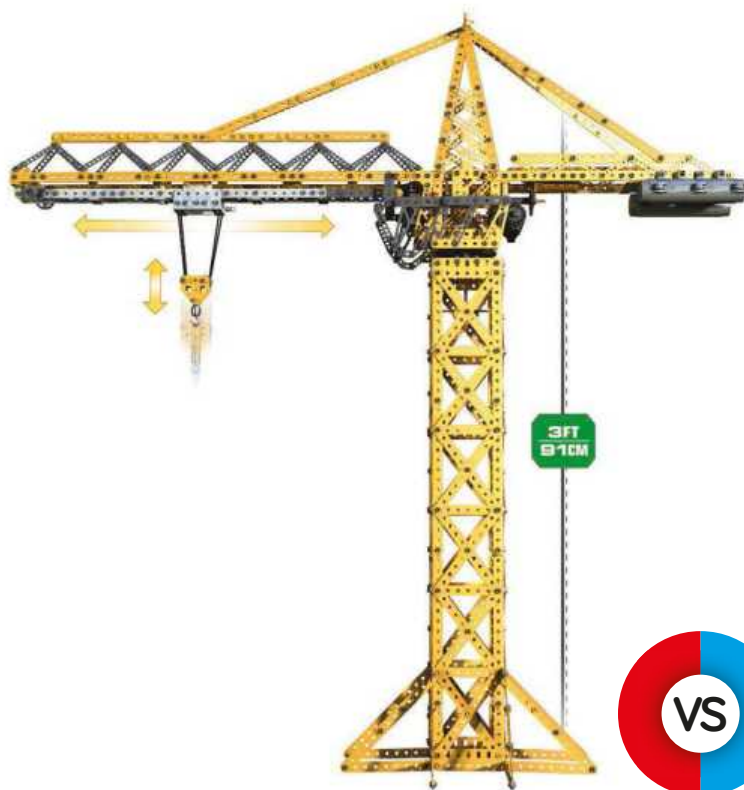
Water wheels HONDA FCV

Slowly but surely, production hydrogen cars are gradually becoming a real option. Hyundai has started selling ix35 Fuel Cell models and there's a near-as-dammit-ready Toyota Mirai drifting about in the world somewhere. Honda, meanwhile, following up from its FCX Clarity test cars, has just released the first image of the production FCV, due to hit Japanese roads in March 2016 and elsewhere in 2017. Should be a few more hydrogen refuelling stations by then, we hope.

Rtba (due 2017) / honda.com

About 140bhp
and a 640km
range might not
sound like the
future, but it only
emits water.





For constructing model train stations MECCANO TOWER CRANE

Did you ever play with a Meccano set as a kid? The engineering starter kit has only advanced over the years, until we arrive at this – the Meccano Tower Crane. Standing a metre high, featuring 360 degree rotation and working lift, as well as a staggering 1741 parts, the Tower Crane is rated for use by kids aged 12 and up. But if this were to land under our tree, no kid's getting within a kilometre of it until we've assembled everything, including the three motors and LED lighting that goes with it.

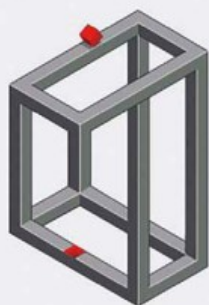
[R5000 / hamleys.com](http://R5000/hamleys.com)

Is this... Johnny Five?

MECCANO MECCANOID G15/G15 KS

If you like your fearsome engineering feats with a side of robotics, however, then the motorised crane has to give way to Meccano's Meccanoid – which arrived as either the smaller G15 or 1.2 metre tall G25 KS model. There are 621 parts for the smaller of the pair, with six servo motors, and 1223 parts for the larger (and ten servos) so the build process is just the start. There's basic movement-based programming, voice activation and control, custom menus and builds, as well as a rudimentary AI to explore. Top that, Mister Engineering Project.

[R2200 / thekidzone.co.za](http://R2200/thekidzone.co.za)



DROP EVERYTHING AND DOWNLOAD...

hocus. R14 / iOS

Getting on for two years have passed since we suddenly became obsessed by the isometric emotional experience that was *Monument Valley*. People who disliked it generally turned their noses up because they said it was too simple. They are not going to like *hocus.*, which takes the baffling 2D/3D puzzle element and focuses entirely on it. Guiding your featureless cube along

the pathways is done by swiping. There's no shape rotation, no enemies, no push buttons: just you and the cube and all the time in the world to figure out how to get it to the exit. Sounds boring? Banal? Mind-numbing, even? Just wait 'til it gets its hooks in you. At just R14 for 50 levels, you're looking at one hell of a lot of bang – not to mention head-banging frustration – for your buck.

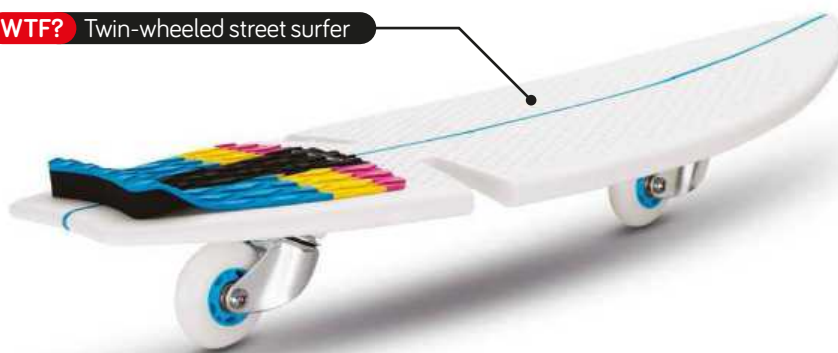


Between you and the final straw PURE EVOKE F3

Picture the scene: You're in the kitchen, you're cooking, the oven's playing up and the kids are rampaging. The song on the Bluetooth speaker is annoying you so you reach for your phone to change it. Instead, you see a text from your partner saying they're going to be late home. Instead of changing the track, you snap. You walk out of that kitchen and never return. Now imagine that, instead of a Bluetooth speaker, you had this colour-screened Pure Evoke streaming Spotify Connect, Wi-Fi or Bluetooth. You'd have changed the track on it, not seen your phone, not got in a rage and not abandoned your family. Music for thought, isn't it?

R2 800 (import) / pure.com

WTF? Twin-wheeled street surfer

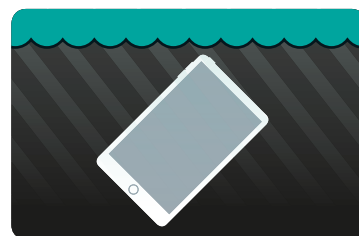


Concrete-carving dignity-stripper RAZOR RIPSURF

In the dungeons of the *Stuff* castle, there's a room where wheely things go to die. Unicycles, electric skateboards and even a Sinclair C5: these are the relics of good but injurious times. One of last year's highlights was the Crazy Cart – You Tube it only if you are ready to find yourself immediately scratching around for the R8 500 to buy one – and its creator now has a new thing. The RipSurf runs on two rollerblade-wheeled casters, with enough flex in the board that you can, with youthful hip movement, gain propulsion without having to push with your feet. You can carve along on one wheel and smash into furniture – or parked cars – with abandon.

approx R1500 / razor.com

DECIPHER ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN...



#8 INGRESS PROTECTION

Gadget and component makers love buzzy terminology. The phrase

'aerospace-grade aluminium' is factually correct... but still irritating. The grades of aluminium alloy that are used in planes are also used to make fairly mundane things. So your shiny iPhone 6s uses 'bicycle-grade aluminium'. Whoop.

Anyway, the misappropriation we want to clear up here is the Ingress Protection (IP) ratings assigned to products that are in some way rugged or water-resistant. The most confusing part is that the two digits in, say, an IP68 rating refer to two different aspects.

The first number (6) refers to protection against solid objects like dust or sand, measured from 0 to 6. The second, from 0 to 9, is for water. When quoting the rating, manufacturers often omit the irrelevant digit and replace it with an X,

IN 'IP68', THE TWO NUMBERS REFER TO DIFFERENT PROOFS: DUST AND WATER

describing something as 'waterproof to IPX8'. Obviously, that doesn't mean the product has no dust resistance – in this case, 'X' just equals 'not bothered'.

One final bit of confusion and then we're done. The water ratings aren't linear. Wiki up 'IP Code' and you'll see that '5', '6' and '9' ratings have to do with jets of water, '7' and '8' with immersion. Sony, bless it, has thus taken it upon itself to describe its Xperia phones as being both IP65 and IP68.

It's the kind of confusion-compounding pedantry some people get a kick out of. Not us. We're off to find out what Gorilla Glass has to do with gorillas.

Tech all the boxes.



It's easy to do with the New Passat, equipped with innovative features like Adaptive Cruise Control*, front and rear Park Distance Control and a 6.5-inch touchscreen media system. Plus, there's Active Info Display* to turn your instrument cluster into an interactive, customisable screen. It's the future now available on four wheels.

New Passat. Think New.

Passat specifications: 110kW TSI Comfortline Manual, 110kW TSI Comfortline DSG®, 132kW Highline DSG®, 162kW R-Line DSG®.

*Optional features

Visit vw.co.za/Passat



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Das Auto.

SPARK AND RIDE

Electric bicycles go from geek to chic

ALL-TERRAINER

Haibike Hard Nine SL

Until fairly recently the words "electric bicycle" conjured up images of weedy sorts in tweed with panniers stuffed with philosophy books. But those days are long gone. Today, electric bicycles come in all manner of shapes and sizes, including the mountain-biking variety. And, thanks to slimmer batteries, you could well fly past packs of MAMILs (Middle-Aged Men in Lycra) at the Braamfontein Spruit on a Sunday morning without them even realising you've got electrified assistance between your legs. Germany's Haibikes are a perfect case in point: elegant, understated MTBs that look like they'd work just as well with a flat battery as a fully charged one. The clever folk at Haibike have also rotated the motor so that it sits within the inner frame trapeze? What does that mean in non-bike speak? It means you're less likely to accidentally take it out on a rock. We'll take two, please.

from R40 000 / cyclelab.co.za

STEALTH PEDDLER



Coboc Ecycle

The electric bike market has developed a special new allure: maturity. Gone are the frills and flaunts of excessively high power or unnecessarily long range. With the battery built in to the downtube and the motor in the rear-wheel hub, the Coboc looks like a normal bicycle. (If the riding position looks a little racy, then Coboc has a more laid-back version planned for 2016.) The eCycle only weighs 13.5kg, and can go up to 80km on a two-hour charge.

R70 000 / coboc.co.uk

SPIDEY SENSE



Garmin Varia

The Varia rear view bike radar warns cyclists of vehicles as much as 140 metres away approaching from behind. Why? Because getting hit from behind (no, not like that) is the leading cause of cycling fatalities. The Varia also integrates with compatible Edge bicycle computers and there's even the option to add smart front and rear lights that brighten, dim and change angle depending on the conditions.

R3 900 / garmin.co.za



WE HAVE

« STRAP IN AND PREPARE TO ENTER THE CHRISTMASPHERE »

GIFT- OFF

THE MAGIC WAND OF LIGHT PAINTING



Pixelstick

Do you know a snapper who loves the streaky lights of a long-exposure shot? If so, don't be deceived by the Pixelstick's name – this is no selfie-enabling junk. It's a light-painting tool capable of conjuring up the most incredible images. Just stick in an SD card loaded with the image of your choice and the Pixelstick's 200 RGB LEDs will display it. Then wave it around, take a long exposure and prepare to be wowed.

R4800 / thepixelstick.com



SanDisk Ultra 200GB microSD

It's not the sexiest of gifts, but furnish your snap-happy loved one with 200GB of storage and they'll be yours forever. It can be slotted into your Android phone or tablet, plus it comes with an adaptor for a proper camera. It's class 10 certified, so ideal for shooting full HD video.

R3 000 (import) / sandisk.co.uk



Polaroid Snap Instant Camera

Photography in 2015: 1) Take pics on your 20MP phone; 2) share them via Twittbookgram; 3) never look at them again. Polaroid wants to change all that. Take a picture with its 10MP cam and its built-in Zero Ink printer will instantly produce a real, physical 2x3in print.

R1400 (import) / polaroid.com



Xseries Bendy

A tripod is an essential tool for any photographer, and the flexible mini tripod that is the Xseries Bendy is available in three sizes (mini for phones, standard for compact cams, big for DSLRs) Its twisty turny legs can be wrapped around anything to give you a stable shooting base.

from R300 / takealot.com

PHOTO NERD



USE IT WITH...

SPACEPAK CLOTHES COMPRESSION UNIT

Get a bonus luggage upgrade with these air-vent-equipped packing aids, which compress to leave more room for gadgets.

R840 / bearandbear.com



COUNTRY HOPPER



ONE

Tooletries Bathroom Travel Case

If it wasn't likely to cost us thousands in luggage fees, we'd like our suitcase to be shaped like a giant toolkit. But as that's impractical we'll settle for this hardshell washbag, which protects its contents from being crushed and has a waterproof lining to prevent any aftershave disasters.

R420 / thefowndry.com

TWO

Xoo Charging Belt

Travel tech doesn't come much more stealthy than a belt with a built-in phone charger. Sure, you might have to explain it to airport security (it complies with all airline regulations), but imagine the smug feeling when your tablet starts running out of juice midway through *Birdman*.

R3450 / xoo.co

THREE

Brunton Revolt 9000

Shockproof, weatherproof and big enough to hold six full smartphone charges, this super-tough battery will keep your tech juiced no matter how far you've strayed from civilisation. It comes with a 3-in-1 adaptor to make sure it's compatible with both Androids and iPhones.

R1400 (import) / brunton.com

FOUR

Wondercube

Ask yourself what you think it's possible to fit into the space of a single cubic inch. A phone stand? A battery booster? A memory card reader? How about a torch? Well, the Wondercube packs all of these things and more into the same space as your dinkiest keyring.

R750 / thewondercube.com

FIVE

LuminAID Inflatable Camping Light

Camping lanterns aren't just bulky space-hoggers; they love devouring batteries too. Not this sun-powered inflatable light, which packs down into pocketable form and gives an impressive 16 hours of illumination from just six hours in the sun. It will also float when the floods come.

R270 / takealot.com



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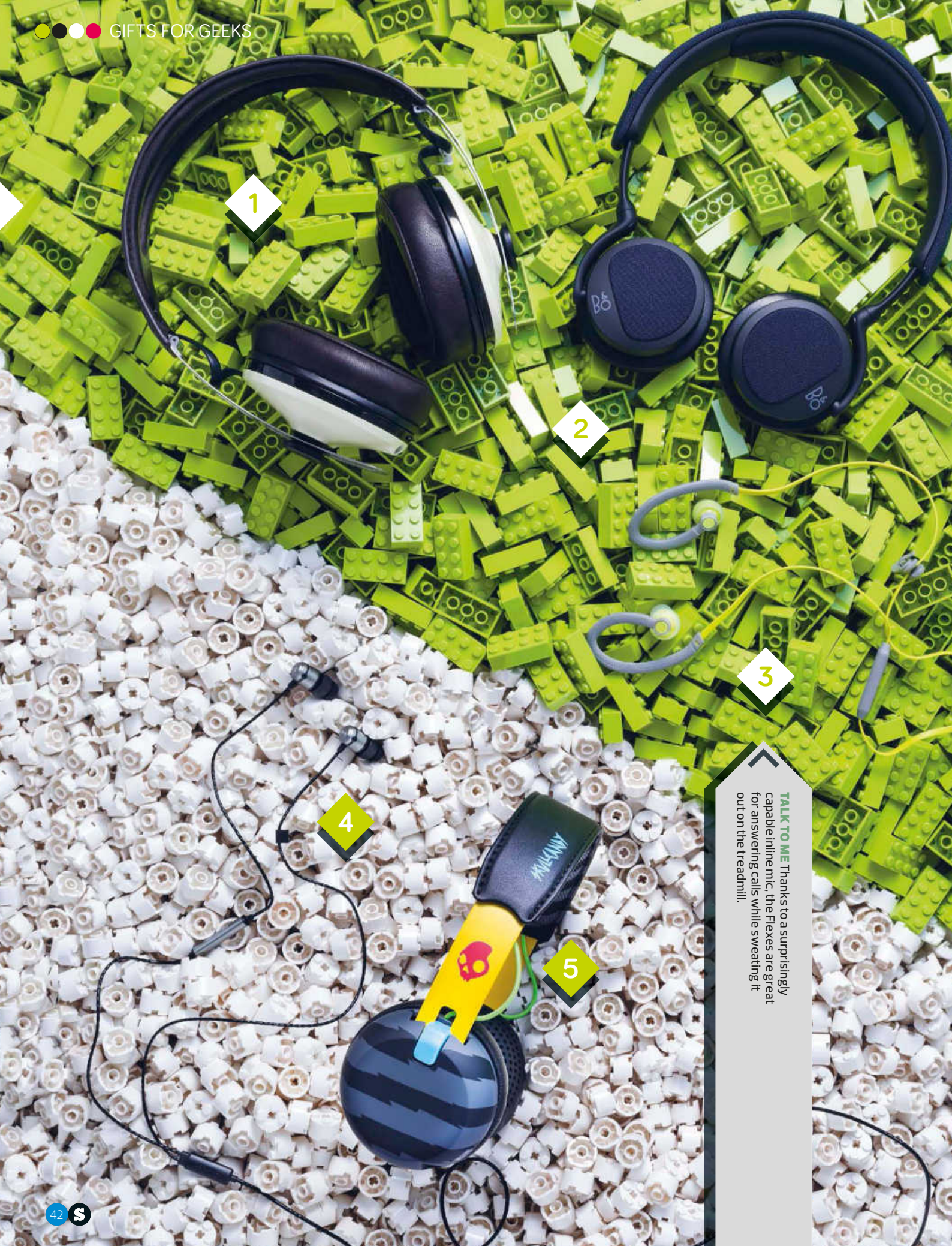
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BENDY BATTERIES The Xoo uses a new type of flexible battery and has enough capacity to fully charge an iPhone or Android phone.



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TALK TO ME Thanks to a surprisingly capable inline mic, the Flexes are great for answering calls while sweating it out on the treadmill.

CANS FAN

ONE

Sennheiser Momentum Wireless

The gift for the person you truly love, these cans combine the subtly sexy looks of the Momentum range with tech-tastic, audiophile-pleasing aptX Bluetooth. That means you look good, your music sounds better and you're not tethered to your phone. They last for 22 hours of sweet ear-lovin'.

R5 800 / sennheiser.co.za

TWO

B&O BeoPlay H2

Headphones are now inescapably objects of fashion. They say things about their wearers, such as 'I admire the style of the superstar DJ' or 'I'm refined and tasteful in a Danish way'. If the latter applies to you, you'll love the look of these. More importantly, these on-ears sound superb.

R3 300 / ultrasound.co.za

THREE

Soul Electronics Flex

Upgrading a jogger to some proper sports earphones doesn't have to cost a fortune. This pair has hooks to keep the buds in securely, and controls for volume and skipping tracks, because you don't want an unexpected bit of Leonard Cohen sapping their home-stretch motivation.

R1100 / soulelectronics.com

FOUR

SoundMagic E50S

You could buy your loved one a pair of earphones for R300, but if you *really* love them, you should stretch the budget to this fine pair. They'll work with almost any flavour of phone, they'll fit even the most misshapen of ears and they sound absolutely terrific for the money.

R1100 / sound-magic.co.za

FIVE

Skullcandy Grind

If you know someone who bangs on about kickflips, can-cans or toe rolls, these are the headphones for them: tough enough to handle a tour of the skate park, available in enough colours to match the most lurid of decks, and with controls on the cups for changing tracks mid-ride.

R800 / luksbrands.co.za

KRAFTWERK IN THEIR POCKET



Teenage Engineering Pocket Synths

There's a lead synth, a bass synth and a drum machine. The bass one is the best, because it's got a picture of a submarine on it, but they all offer the same unique combination of dinky lo-fi looks – like the flimsiest calculator you ever tried to smuggle into a maths exam – and wild, glitchy, highly tweakable sounds. Your recipient will need two AAA batteries and, ideally, a beard.

R960 / teenageengineering.com



DigiTech Trio

Scared off the rest of the band with those 18-minute wah-wah solos? Ah, who needs backing musicians anyway? Not you, if Santa turns up with one of these fellas.

The Trio generates bass and drum parts in response to your playing: pick a genre, pick a style, set the tempo... and jam. The only thing it can't do is a drummer tantrum.

R4 700 / musicexperience.co.za



Blackstar Fly 3

Small enough to hide under a sandwich, the Fly 3 is all anyone really needs in the way of a bedroom practice amp. It'll certainly do for a nipper who's had his or her head turned by seeing One Direction pretending to strum some chords on YouTube. It has nice clean and distorted tones, and an aux input for MP3 audio.

R1200 / takealot.com



TC Electronic Hall Of Fame Mini

This titchy stompbox has just one control, yet it offers more sounds than any other reverb pedal you've ever heard.

The TonePrint app lets you load any one of TC's many superb 'verbs into it simply by holding your phone against your guitar's pickup and pressing 'Beam'. Cavernously good.

R2700 / musicexperience.com

MUSIC MAKER



USE IT WITH...

TIDAL HI-FI

If their golden ears demand lossless FLAC quality, Tidal's the streaming service to choose.

R120/month / tidal.com

THE 21ST
CENTURY
UNDERWOOD



Qwerkywriter

Channel your inner F Scott Fitzgerald as you click-clack flowing prose in frivolous style with the Qwerkywriter. Ideal for would-be smartphone novelists in need of some vintage satisfaction, this set o' keys connects wirelessly to your iThings via Bluetooth, and features a built-in tablet stand, programmable return bar and retro key caps for the perfect mobile melding of modern and mechanical.

R4 500 / qwerkywriter.com



Ondu Pinhole Camera

It doesn't get much more retro than a photography technique that dates back to the ninth century, and these beautiful wooden pinhole cameras offer the kind of violet-tinged, grainy charm that you can't get with an Instagram filter. Choose from ten different models.

from R960 / ondupinhole.com



Trim Phone

Based on the first phone to use an electronic warbler, this re-imagining of the TRING ringer plugs straight into a standard phone socket. Available in suitable '70s colours, this replica replaces the original dialler with buttons, while retaining the otherworldly oldness that retro-revellers will revere.

R840 / designmuseumshop.com



Pipework Candlestick

Plumbing may involve some pretty revolting materials, but there's beauty in there. Intricate pipework, copper seals, brass valves: the stuff of design dreams. And now you can have that under-basin chic right on your dining room table, as these drippy dazzlers make for a pipingly perfect centrepiece.

R590 (import) / nickfraser.co.uk

RETRO LOVER

TEA FORTE PRE-PORTIONED LOOSE LEAF TEA

This is an easy way to get your gift recipient to try out something other than Ceylon, Rooibos or Earl Grey.

R220 / yuppiechef.com

USE IT WITH...



DESIGN DEVOTEE

ONE

Lexon Liquid Station Desktop Organiser

A uniquely stylish solution to workstation clutter, the droopy dips of this super stationery store make space for everything from paperclips to Post-its. Best of all, it doubles up as a deliciously juicy jelly mould.

Okay, we made that bit up.
R680 / designboom.com

TWO

Nanoleaf Bloom

A lightbulb for Christmas? It might sound like a high-risk gift strategy, but the Bloom is a surprisingly strong stocking contender. It's so efficient it promises to last over 27 years (past Christmas 2042, in fact). It's also dimmable, even if you don't have a dimmer switch.

R550 / shop.nanoleaf.me

THREE

CMYK Colour Swatch Calendar

With 371 carefully chosen shades, this colour-of-the-day calendar will deliver an inspiring, coordinated strip of hues to your designer friend every week. Each strip is complete with its corresponding CMYK colour value too, should your recipient be planning to go big on the Dulux.

R600 / typografie.de

FOUR

Toast Rubberband Cup & Saucer

The aptly-named Rubberband is a simple, stylish solution to mug rack blandness. A perfect contrast of white porcelain and colourful silicon, it'll bring some life to the tired teaware gathering dust in their cupboard – particularly if paired with the range's matching teapot.

R550 / designers-avenue.com

FIVE

Beyond Object Align

Like the classic 'Zig-Zag' illusion, where a magician divides his surprisingly chirpy assistant into three pieces, the Align's 'dislocated' form entices you to twist its stem back into flush-fitting form. It might be overkill for shopping lists, but pen-loving pals will love it.

R835 / beyond-object.com



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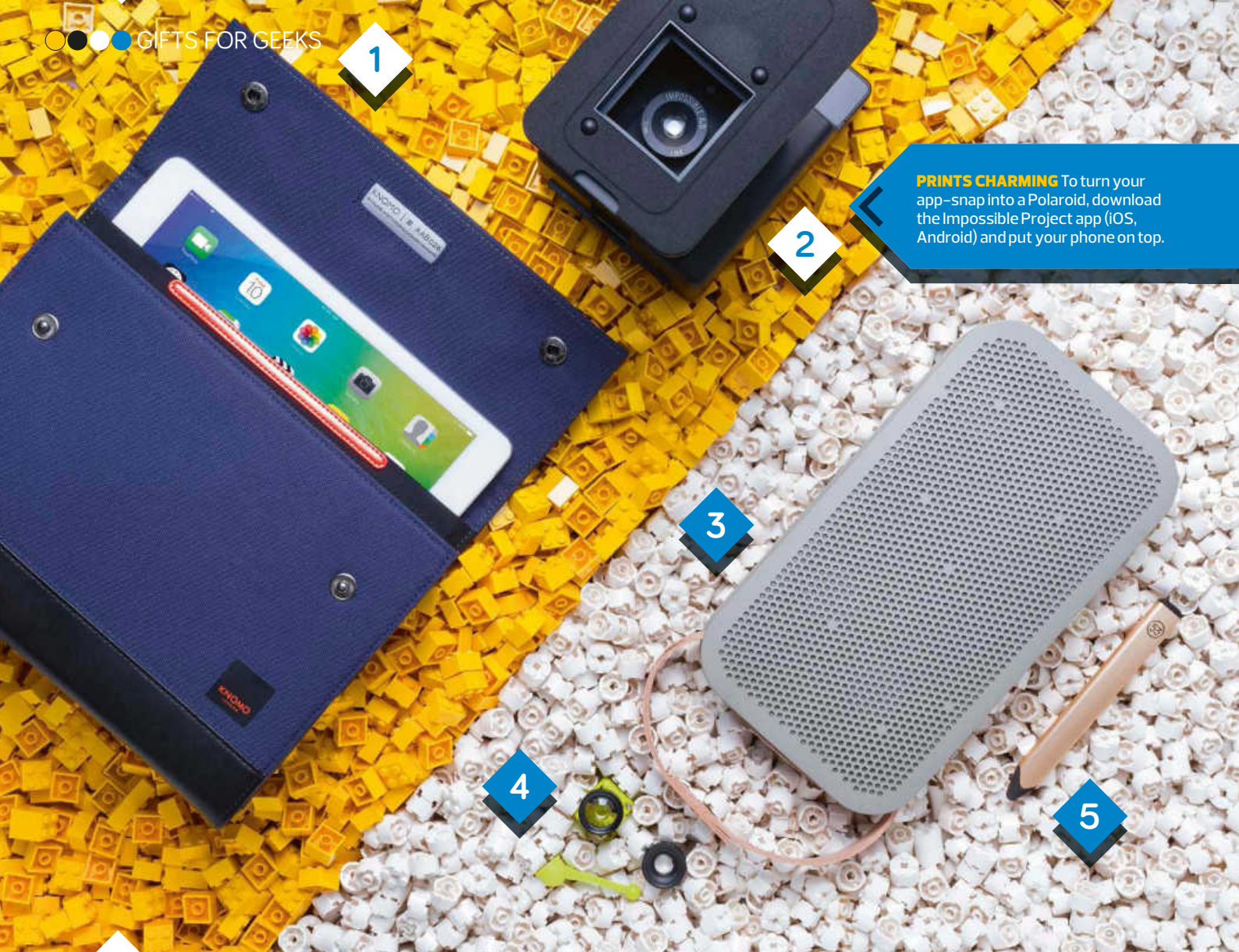
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BRIGHT IDEA Turn your standard light switch on to make the Bloom slowly brighten – then press it again to lock in your chosen brightness.

2016		
emv		
24	sunday	50 40 0 0
23	saturday	53 0 35 0
22	friday	0 55 10 0
21	thursday	50 10 0 0
20	wednesday	53 50 0 0
19	tuesday	50 0 15 0
18	monday	0 50 30 0



APPLE FAN



USE IT WITH... **PAPER (Free, iOS)**
This sketching app has added diagram tools and annotations to its brushes and pens.

ONE Knomad Air Shoreditch

Rooting around in a backpack while someone reclines a chair into your face is never an aeroplane highlight, so save a friend such travel anguish with this water-resistant iPad Air case. It holds any 10in tablet, plus pens, passport, phone and Knomo's own slim battery pack. **R1050 / istoreonline.co.za**

TWO Instant Lab Universal

It's not a true Throwback Thursday until everyone gets their smartphone snaps printed out on Polaroid instant film. This dinky darkroom will do just that, spitting out a real souvenir when you put your phone face-down in its cradle. **R3340 / shop.the-impossible-project.com**

THREE B&O BeoPlay A2 Natural

You can get a great Bluetooth speaker for less money (like the UE Boom 2), but none quite match your Apple fan's taste for build quality and milled aluminium like the A2. Its sound is clean and open, while an impressive 24-hour battery life makes it a fine holiday companion. **R6500 / ultrasound.co.za**

FOUR Lensbaby Creative Mobile Kit

Photography apps like VSCO Cam are so good they almost make snapping too easy, but there are some places their filters can't go. This pack of two lenses plus a kickstand and mount can help create anything from motion-blurred sports shots to kaleidoscopic landscapes. **R1570 / wexphotographic.com**

FIVE FiftyThree Pencil

Apple might have given the iPad Pro a posh stylus, but that doesn't mean other iPad owners can't enjoy some digital sketching and smudging. Best paired with an iPad Air, the Pencil is now pressure-sensitive and works with 18 apps, including Adobe's range and FiftyThree's own Paper. **R1050 / fiftythree.com**

COUCH. CHECK. PIZZA. CHECK.

THERE'S A SHOW FOR THAT

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1

ON A ROLL Laser-engraved measurements on the side ensure pastry precision, in case Monica Galetti's standing over you.

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5

MASTER CHEF

ONE

Aircraft Aluminium Rolling Pin

This roller rod is machined from aircraft-grade aluminium. Why? Well, not only does it give your cutlery drawer a slice of celebrity chef style, but its heat-conducting skills make for cool culinary creativity, whether you're in a steaming hot kitchen or next to an open window in July.

R840 / thefowndry.com

TWO

Drop Scale

An iPad-compatible wireless weighing whizz, this smart scale adjusts recipes in response to the amount of ingredients you have. Best of all, the capacitive touch button on the silicon scale itself means no need to tap your sticky digits all over your tablet. Delicious.

R1670 / getdrop.com

THREE

Medamade Oil Dispenser

When the mother-in-law swings by for a delicious pasta dinner you need to up your oil game. Grab this conical container, constructed from borosilicate glass and complete with gravitational pouring mechanism, and she'll be bowled over by your olive knowledge.

R630 / designmuseumshop.com

FOUR

Oxo Good Grips Spiralizer

If you're looking to help someone kick their pasta addiction, stick a spiralizer in their stocking. It slices vegetables into spirals, turning a courgette into noodles that taste just like pasta (they do once they're covered in pesto, anyway). Super-healthy – although it could also be great for curly fries...

R320 / thehut.com

FIVE

Cosmic Dinner Plate (Mars)

If you can't quite afford to get your favourite stargazer a new telescope, bring the planets to their dinner table instead with this range of planetary plates. All 11 are safe for microwaves and dishwashers, and if you buy a few you'll get to spark arguments over who gets to eat their pizza off Pluto.

R630 each / amara.com



IS IT A BIRD? YES.
BUT ALSO A
CORKSCREW



Alessi Parrot

If you want someone to have a warm fuzzy feeling whenever they think about you, giving them a distinctive corkscrew is surely an effective choice. Every time they take this nice hand-painted parrot from the kitchen drawer they'll be reminded of your good taste and generosity, and then they'll have a glass of wine.

R750 (import) / store.alessi.com



Molecular Mixology kit

Adding a nip of lemon juice to your Savanna bottle once constituted a cocktail, but now society demands that each sip of their Manhattan contains a sphere of flavours that burst lightly upon their tongue. This kit can create such marvels. Two dirty martinis, please, barman.

from R500 / firebox.com



American White Oak Toasted Barrel

Thanks to its greater surface-area-to-booze ratio, a small barrel will 'age' spirits – give them deeper, softer flavour – much quicker than a big one. So your whisky aficionado can put some young spirit into this little tub for two weeks, and it'll come out tasting like it's been aged for two years.

R880 / masterofmalt.com



The Cocktail Club

Cocktail is a funny word. It wasn't that long ago that you couldn't say either one of its two parts on TV. But cocktails are a lot of fun, even though they make you lose the feeling in your legs. So let's do that for a year. This book will be your guide, with monthly cocktail options that you'll ignore anyway.

R320 / takelalot.com

BOOZE HOUND



USE IT WITH... DROP KITCHEN

This companion app for the Drop Scale serves up hundreds of free recipes and will handily suggest substitutes for any ingredients you've run out of. **Free (iOS)**



8-Bit Pixel Clock

"Wow, Dad, is this a *Minecraft* clock?" Because while big chunky pixels fill one generation with nostalgia for *Mega Man* and *Metroid*, they're just as popular with the following generation, which uses them in *Minecraft* as a digital version of Lego (which is itself still really popular with everyone). So: "Er... yeah, why not? That's why I bought it, because you like *Minecraft*. Heh heh."

R320 / gamerabilia.co.uk



Lexon Flip Clock

At some point in our evolutionary past, scientists say, we were menaced by nocturnal tortoises. As a result, most of us feel an instinctive urge to flip something over when we wake up. The Flip Clock is ideal: you silence the alarm by flipping it, but the display rights itself so you don't think it's 00:01 when it's actually 10:00.

R600 / lexon-design-store.com



Monkey Clock

Vinyl records aren't easily recyclable but they are eminently upcyclable, and design company Upstairs Studio takes unwanted records and turns them into wall clocks. We're huge fans of this monkey-in-a-hat design because, while it's stylish and eco-conscious, it's also a monkey in a hat.

R585 / bouf.com



Nixie FunKlock Kit

No nerd's lair is complete without retro-futuristic glowing tubes ticking out the hours. This comes as a kit, so there's soldering involved, but for many geeks that will only add to the appeal. The backlight colours are programmable, as is a night mode if you plan on having it in a bedroom.

R990 / pvelectronics.co.uk

TIME LORD

ONE

Sturmanskie Yuri Gagarin

It's said that NASA spent millions creating a pen that would work in space, while the Russians just used pencils. And it's a myth. But don't let that stop you telling the story when explaining the Soviet simplicity of this watch, of the same make and design that Yuri Gagarin wore.

R1570 / sciencemuseumshop.co.uk

TWO

Leff Tube Watch D42

If you're buying for someone with a taste for industrial design, then this solidly beautiful chunk of time is worth the investment. The case and minute/hour markers are made from an extruded aluminium ring, so it looks simple, but still allows for accurate time-reading.

R3150 / designwharf.com

THREE

Swatch Sistem51

A fiendishly brilliant movement of 51 parts held together by a single screw makes this a proper, self-winding, Swiss-made mechanical watch. But unlike other proper, self-winding Swiss watches, this one's a colourful and fun piece of modern design, and it doesn't cost a fortune.

from R2200 / swatch.com/en-za

FOUR

G-Shock G'MIX GBA-400

This semi-smart watch pairs up with your phone to offer volume and track control, audio effects and notifications, and it will even use SoundHound to recognise tunes that are playing outside your cans. It can also use your phone to auto-sync to network time wherever you are.

R3900 / mycasioworld.co.za

FIVE

Shore Camber

Shore's gift boxes combine any of their watches with any three of their nicely made straps. Pick a metal, silicone and leather combo to go with one of their faces and you're effectively giving someone three different watches for a bargain price.

R2400 (R3560 for gift box) / shoreprojects.com

CLOCK STAR

ALTERNATIVELY...

BAD DOG DESIGNS

If you don't fancy reacquainting yourself with a soldering iron, this store sells a fine range of pre-built Nixie clocks.

bad-dog-designs.co.uk





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PRIDE OF FACE The Camber is one of 14 faces you can choose from when making a Shore Gift Box; there are also 24 types of strap.

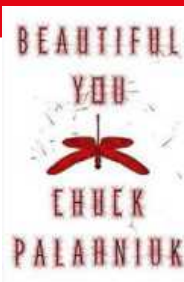
RAVENOUS READER



ONE

The Making Of 2001: A Space Odyssey
Piers Bizony

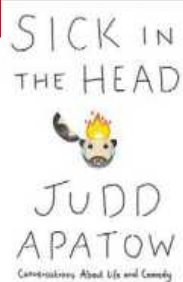
Kubrick's 1968 galaxy-spanning movie remains a cornerstone of sci-fi, and now you can go behind the scenes of the space epic that created space epics. With a compendium of interstellar images from the production, as well as concept paintings and publicity prints, this is perfect for visual visionaries. No HAL included, sadly.



TWO

Beautiful You
Chuck Palahniuk

Think of *Fight Club*. Then think of the diametric opposite of it. Does it involve the world's most potent sex toys, so effective that women flock in their millions to buy them from a rogue named C Li Maxwell? So magnificent that they stop leaving their rooms? No? Well, the author of the former just wrote a book about the latter.



THREE

Sick In The Head
Judd Apatow

Comedy's a personal preference – one man's slapstick is in another's stand-up sin bin, which makes finding funny fancies for friends fiendishly fraught. But fear not, for this leafer is packed with stories from everyone in the (US) banter biz. From wild anecdotes to starstruck stories, this is a thoroughly good laugh-a-long that talks to the likes of Silverman, Rogen, Schumer and Jonze.



FOUR

Thing Explainer
Randall Munroe

As much as we love, well, stuff, it can be confusing. Nuclear thermodynamics? Cellular biology? Microwaves? Hard to put into words. Thankfully, *Thing Explainer* does just that, using only the 1000 most common words to describe the devices, science, and inventions that baffle us non-boffins. Put some popcorn in the food-heating radiobox and enjoy.



FIVE

Vinyl: The Art Of Making Records
Mike Evans

Following the LP's rebirth as prime collectible material, *Vinyl* harks back to the days when cover art sold albums and every reissued record had fresh visuals. From design and packaging to special grooves and picture discs, this book un-jackets the inputs of labels, designers and artists on symbolic singles and long-renowned LPs.



Reel History
Alex von Tunzelmann

If you'd rather revel in the action without going Full Nerd, try this quest through movie history to discern fact from fib. Did Cleopatra really bathe in milk? Did Lincoln really patent swipe to unlock?



The Water Knife
Paolo Bacigalupi

This novel charts a journey on the edge of civilisation's collapse, where deaths rack up in pursuit of Earth's most valuable commodity. No, not a *Stuff* magazine subscription: it's a search for water.



You're All Just Jealous Of My Jetpack
Tom Gauld

For those who prefer their funnies with some sharp observations, try this from the *Guardian* cartoonist, who blends the absurd with the intellectual.



The Four-Dimensional Human
Laurence Scott

Once you've cracked the lingo, delve into what it means to be a human in the digital age. From new knowledge portals to always-on access, this era has changed not just society but us, the people in it.



Good Night And Good Riddance
David Cavanagh

This book charts the life of Britain's biggest underdog broadcaster, John Peel. Throwing the spotlight on 300 of his shows over a 35-year period, it's a fan-focused foray into his world.

ALTERNATIVELY...



Skullcandy

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and wireless



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Take your playlist wherever you go.

PLUSH EAR PILLOWS

Superior comfort for all day wear.

HESH 2 WIRELESS
Move Freely

YOUNG. WIRELESS. FREE.





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TROPHY HUNTER As motivating as the Vivoactive itself is Garmin's Connect platform, which lets you set goals and win virtual badges.

FITNESS FREAK

ONE

Sony Smart B-Trainer

If you can't decide between a GPS watch, a fitness band or heart-rate tracking headphones for your beloved runner, this combines all three. They also get pace-matched music, 16GB of onboard tunes and a 10-hour battery life, which means they won't have to take their phone running.

R5 640 / japantrendshop.com

TWO

Qardioarm

For the scientifically-minded sportsman in your bar clan, this clinically validated smart monitor gives you blood pressure smarts in your lounge. It tracks systolic and diastolic BP and detects irregular heartbeats, monitoring their changes through the day.

R1400 (import) / getqardio.com

THREE

Zepp Tennis Kit

Like a miniature Ivan Lendl (pity it can't replicate his withering glare), this accessory coaches players by capturing racquet speed, power and accuracy, before crunching the data into a 3D animation that can be viewed instantly in its iOS and Android phone app.

R1700 / macnificent.co.za

FOUR

Garmin Vivoactive

The Khotso Mokoena of GPS watches, this all-rounder mixes tracking for various sports with notifications from your phone. It doesn't have heart-rate monitoring built in, but sleep analysis and compatibility with Garmin's highly motivating Connect platform make it a tempting piece of gear.

R4 500 / capeunionmart.co.za

FIVE

Adidas Ultra Boost

These sneakers' styrofoam-like cushioning is regarded by runners of all levels as one of the most comfortable rides around, while their Primeknit upper expands with your foot on long runs. Few shoes are better for anything from middle-distance to marathon training.

R2 500 / adidas.co.za

A STRAVA
LOVER'S BEST
FRIEND



Polar M450

Don't let your friend's addiction to the Strava app put you off buying them a standalone GPS computer. Neat handlebar units like this will save their phone battery on long rides, and feed their stats obsession thanks to compatibility with power, speed and heart-rate sensors (sold separately). It's good value and also offers a 'Back to Start' feature for directions home and syncing with, you guessed it, Strava.

R3 200 / sportsmanswarehouse.co.za



Bike wheel coasters

Because if there's one thing better than cycling, it's having a coffee while dunking a rusk and talking about cycling. Remind your favourite cyclist of their (t)rusty steed with this set of four wheely nice coasters.

Why not combine them with home-made saddle stools and a pannier rack patio table for the full package?

R220 / designmuseumshop.com



Cinelli Winged Tape

Designed by Ana Benaroya, this tape will spruce up your bud's handlebars a treat. Combining Cinelli's tape tech and grippy comfort, the Cyclops design is also eye-deal (sorry) for fans of bikes, biology and all things grippy. If nothing else, the red ribbon wrap will set them apart from the rest of the peloton.

from R630 / wingedstore.com



PDW Shiny Object Inflator

If your cyclist friend regularly finds him or herself huffing and puffing at the roadside with a puncture, sort that out with this CO₂ re-inflation kit. Compatible with both Presta and Schrader valves, it's a nice-looking emergency backup for those times a rider gets stuck in a race or a downpour.

R250 / wiggle.co.uk

BIKE GEEK

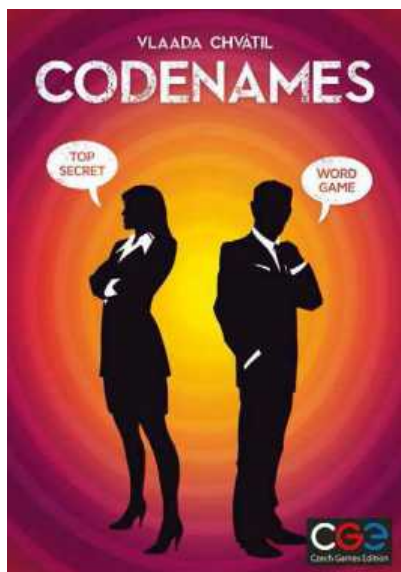


TAKE THEM HERE...

BERG & DAL NIGHT RACE

Take to the road in Krugersdorp at night, tackling either the 5km or 15km races with all the other crazy people.

from R36 / entrytime.com



Codenames

The smartest game of 2015 is simple but ludicrously tense: 25 random words are laid out on the table, and two team leaders have to help their teams guess their assigned words using short clues. So, "furious, five" would hint that five words on the grid have something to do with anger, or maybe the *Fast And The Furious* movies. Be careful, though: guessing the board's 'assassin' word instantly ends the game.

R260 / gameslore.com



Tales Of The Arabian Nights

First published in 1985, this classic choose-your-own-adventure game is now available in a beautiful, even more ambitious edition. Will you find a magical sword and become the Sultan of a glittering city? Find your true love in the belly of a giant sea creature? Or just get arrested for mugging a wizard?

R950 / takealot.com



Skull

First played by the Hell's Angels, this is like poker without all the maths. Players secretly place either skull or rose cards face-down to create something like a field of landmines, and then take bets on how many cards they can flip and reveal only roses. This edition is styled after Mexico's Day of the Dead but there are others.

R350 / takealot.com



Cosmic Encounter

This interstellar empire-building game is different every time. Each player picks an alien race, and each type breaks the game in some way. The Virus must be stopped; the Loser wins if he loses, just like Julius Malema; the Gambler can bluff on their encounter card; and the Citadel can build planet fortifications.

R950 / timelessboardgames.co.za

BOARD GAMER

USE IT WITH...

3D-PRINTED BIRD FEEDER

Complement your chaffinch cam with this feeder – you can print it yourself using this Thingiverse link: bit.ly/3Dbirdfeeder from **R760 / printednest.com**



TECH KID

ONE

Naturebytes Wildlife Cam Kit

If you've seen *Chicken Run* and don't quite trust your garden visitors, this kit might just be what you need. Built using a Raspberry Pi and a camera housed inside a funky angular shell, the Naturebytes kit is a waterproof, heat-sensitive snapper to capture stealthy fauna shots in all weather.

R3150 / naturebytes.org

TWO

Osmo

The Osmo platform will keep kids enthralled for hours, and learning as they go. Slot your iPad into the stand and slip the Reflector over its camera and you've got an interactive puzzle peripheral. As they play, the app intelligently recognises their shapes, letters, numbers and drawings.

R1500 (import) / playosmo.com

THREE

Anki Overdrive

Scalextric for your smartphone, Anki is a modular track of straights and right angles, around which robotic supercars tear in battle or race mode. Compatible with iOS and Android, it lets up to four players control the speed and lane choice, while their cars handle the corners.

R2050 (import) / anki.com

FOUR

Sphero BB-8

This gyroscopic mini-droid is straight out of your sci-fi dreams. No, not the one with Princess Leia. Like a master of the Force, you can control the BB-8 remotely via an app, or it can be left to explore the living room in all its gliding glory, as you record virtual holographics to Obi-Wan (or Mum).

R2800 / istoreonline.co.za

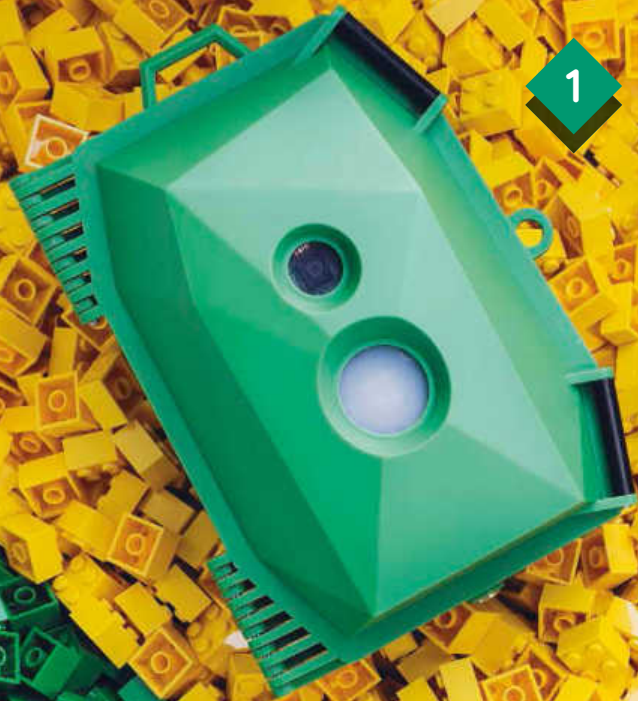
FIVE

Minecraft Gameband

What better way for online offspring to keep crafting wherever they go than to strap their entire brick-built worlds to their wrists? Plug it in, play, and after a day of digital designing, their *Minecraft* Worlds will be saved on the Band and securely backed up on cloud-servers. Blocky brilliance.

R1360 (import) / gameband.com

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WIPEOUT-STYLE WEAPONS
Each Anki car has a unique arsenal of guns like plasma cannons, which players can unleash from the app.

ANDROID ADDICT

ONE

WoodPuck Qi Charger

Few things that go by the description of 'puck' are as pleasing and useful as this. Crafted from finest Mao Zhu bamboo (which is good, because it's very sustainable), this little disc will wirelessly charge any Qi-enabled device in a beautiful fusion of nature and tech.

R821 / fonesalesman.com

TWO

Chromecast / Chromecast Audio

Google's revamped video-streaming dongle still lets you use your phone as a remote for playing web content on your telly, but now it has an improved app, loads of new games and an audio-streaming brother that lets you do the same for playing music on your hi-fi.

from R400 each / takealot.com

THREE

Instacube

For genuinely Instagram-hooked Android fans, it's a drag having to take their phone out of their pocket to flick through celebs' snaps of what they had for lunch. Thankfully, this wireless photo-frame-style touchscreen lets you stream Instapics onto a 'living canvas' on your wall, desk or shelf.

R3150 / firebox.com

FOUR

Homido VR Headset

This stereoscopic 3D, 360° head-tracking helmet turns mobiles into movie magicians. Fully adjustable for eyesight strength and face shape (should Grandpa want a go), the completely wireless headset can also be used to enter a world of immersive 3D gaming. It's compatible with iOS as well as Android.

R1060 / homido.com

FIVE

Moto 360 (2nd gen)

Smartwatches have come a long way from looking like wrist-based PDAs, and the second-gen 360 might just be the prettiest yet. From the circular display and sharper screen to the stainless-steel bezel, it's the Android Wear watch that best stands up to Apple's style-conscious wristputer.

from R4 550 / store.orange.com/za



USE IT WITH... **PLEX (Free)**
If you have a NAS drive, use the Plex app on your phone to play its music on your hi-fi.

WOULD SIR PREFER STONE? If the WoodPuck's bamboo look isn't to their tastes, the QiStone+ is a fine wireless charging alternative.



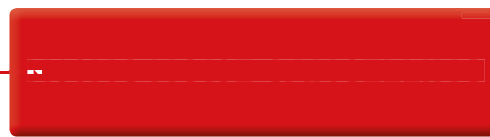
LIGHTS, SOUND, ACTION!

AWESOME FESTIVE DEALS TO GET THE PARTY STARTED



Wirelessly stream music. The built-in rechargeable battery, Bluetooth, and 3.5mm input make it simple to connect hundreds of devices. The exclusive REWIND™ fabric cover and natural bamboo front and back panels are beautiful and sustainable.

2 999⁹⁵



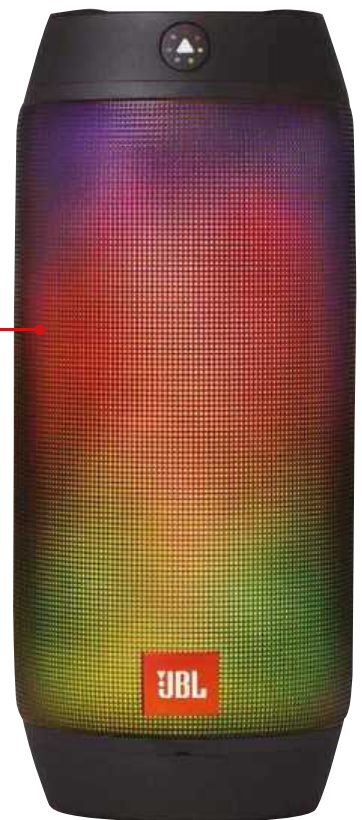
Delivering Grammy Award-winning AKG superior sound while also utilizing best in class active noise cancelling. With up to 30 hours' of battery life & accented with premium material such as aluminium, memory foam and leather. Complete with an exclusive 3D-Axis folding mechanism, a fully-accessorized travel package, a one-button universal remote/mic cable and a USB charging cable.

3 999⁹⁵



Enjoy a 100-LED light show every time you switch on the JBL Pulse 2! External passive radiators deliver a rich bass response, while a rechargeable Li-ion battery supports up to 10 hours' playing time. Take turns playing music - the JBL Pulse 2 connects up to 3 smartphones or tablets at a time. With bluetooth functionality and splash proof - ideal for pool and beach parties!

3 499⁹⁵



A Bluetooth speaker with LED lights to display your pixel art, the Divoom AuraBox is a smart music gadget beyond your wildest imagination. Display whatever you create in the accompanying app, or select a setting that will allow the Divoom AuraBox to react to the music being played. With Bluetooth 4.0 for smooth streaming and a 3-inch full range driver. Also functions as a lamp, digital palette, thermometer and alarm clock.

999⁹⁵



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COOLER THAN THE PLANET HOTH
Is that the moon floating in your glass? No, the Death Star. Sith Lord, life doesn't get much better than this.

FILM BUFF



ONE

Batman Multitool

No, it won't emit a spray that repels sharks, or blast out oil slicks, but this tool is just as important as the rest of the Dark Knight's arsenal of tricks. Although it looks like a deadly throwing star, it is in fact a harmless bottle opener, to free your nectar of choice from its glass confines.

R130 / thefowndry.com

TWO

Hot Wheels 1:43-scale DeLorean

This is for the DeLorean-obsessed person in your life. The one who's always yammering on about buying their dream car before kitting it out with a flux capacitor and authentic year readout display. But they'll never achieve their dream, because life is a cruel, harsh mistress.

R840 (import) / iwantoneofthose.com

THREE

Cocktails Of The Movies

Hollywood and booze have long been intertwined: from Marilyn Monroe's infamous Manhattan to 007's vodka martini, there are iconic drinks littered throughout hundreds of flicks. This illustrated cocktail tome serves up 64 classic recipes from the big screen, promising hours of light-headed fun.

R320 / firebox.com

FOUR

1:9 Iron Man Age Of Ultron Vignette

This is not a toy. Nor is it a figurine. It's a delightful hybrid of the two, which comes unassembled, letting the recipient put it together and pose it any which way they fancy. It's true to the films in every single way, minus Robert Downey Junior's sass and exquisitely sculpted facial hair.

R2 850 / forbiddenplanet.com

FIVE

3D Death Star Ice Cube Tray

You've just destroyed a planet. The Storm Troopers have been working hard, and your dark-robed boss has given you the night off. What better way to unwind than by enjoying a glass of single malt Beshpin whisky, cooled by an ice cube shaped like the very behemoth you're residing in?

R210 / forbiddenplanet.com

MINIFIGS FOR NARCISSISTS



Leblox

This fun little app lets you create your very own pixelated creations, which can be manipulated and placed into existing photos or used as avatars, before sharing them online for all the world to see. Best of all for secret Santas, you can also get your designs 3D-printed and delivered as personalised gifts, without ever having to leave the confines of your smartphone or tablet.

from R320 / leblox.com



Jumbo Cutlery Drainer

This cute yet functional fellow can be used to drain cutlery or hold toothbrushes, thanks to a hollow trunk that drains water away. Its low-poly design should melt the hearts of most – unless they've got a crippling phobia of elephants and/or toothbrushes.

R265 / yuppiegadgets.com



Sneakers: The Trump Card Game

Do you know your Air Force 1s from your Superstars? Can you appreciate a heel-situated air bubble? Do shoelace eyelets send your heart aflutter? No? Well, your trainer-loving mate does, so they'll treasure this 52-piece set of shoe-centric cards more than you will.

R190 / designmuseumshop.com



Spice Rack

What do Sargol saffron, premium Madagascan vanilla powder, true Ceylon cinnamon powder and fragrant green cardamon powder all have in common? Well, they're four of the most expensive spices on the planet, and this matchbox presents them in adorable miniature bottles. Ideal to spice up any foodie's life.

R105 / inamatchbox.com

SECRET SANTA



PAIR IT WITH...

FLUX CAPACITOR

How are you ever going to know when that thrown smartphone will start time-travelling without a Flux Capacitor. Great Scott!

R14 / iOS, Android

BINGEWATCHER



ONE

The Wire

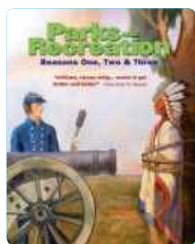
The Greatest TV Show Ever Made™ finally gets the box set it deserves, swapping standard-def 4:3 for full HD widescreen like it's 2008 or something. But those extra pixels are almost incidental when you're watching this near-flawless study of a city, even if it will take an episode of two to tune into the accents. And since you asked, series two's our favourite.



TWO

Agent Carter

A curious and short spin-off from the beginnings of Marvel's Captain America timeline, this eight-episode series was not heavily marketed in SA, meaning that a lot of people missed its TV airing. But the antics of Agent Peggy Carter, in a stylishly realised post-WWII America, are well worth catching up on – especially if Agent Father Christmas is footing the bill.



THREE

Parks And Recreation

If your children won't stop crying because of all the nasty things Doctor Who said when they accidentally watched your *The Thick Of It* box set, sit the family down in front of *Parks And Recreation* series 1, 2 and 3. It takes the heartfelt niceness of *The Office* and turns it up a notch, but somehow manages to remain charming and genuinely funny.



FOUR

Mad Men

A psychiatric ward for damaged men allows its inmates to pretend they work at an ad agency in the 1960s. Special nurses work as 'secretaries', towards whom the tragic invalids are alternately lusty and unforgivably offensive... Wait, you didn't know about this? What about the name? And why do you think every episode ends with Don staring into space like he's just been tranquilised?



FIVE

House Of Cards

Unless you've been living under a rock for the last couple of years you can't have failed to notice this blockbuster political remake, which secured Netflix's status not just as a streaming service, but as a maker of Big TV Shows. If you actually have been living under a rock for two years then you're probably a crab, in which case try Crabblix's *House Of Crabs*.

ALTERNATIVELY...



Fargo

This isn't a remake of the Coen brothers film but shares its snowy setting, murderous themes and blackly hilarious style. It's also equally good – Martin Freeman's weaselly salesman Lester Nygaard is a particular highlight.



Fear The Walking Dead

This spin-off from *The Walking Dead* (now in its sixth season) tells the story of what happened before Rick Grimes woke up in an abandoned hospital. Don't worry, there's still plenty of zombies.



The Thick Of It

We can't help wishing there was a real Malcolm Tucker to stride into politicians' offices, scream abuse at them and fire them on the spot every so often, but we'll make do with Peter Capaldi in this, the defining political comedy of a generation.



Boardwalk Empire

Inspired by the life of Enoch L Johnson, a real criminal kingpin in prohibition-era Atlantic City, this five-season gangster drama is an American classic, a period masterpiece and quite possibly Steve Buscemi's finest hour.



Orange Is The New Black

Based on the real-life experiences of middle-class jailbird Piper Kerman, *OITNB* manages to be smart and funny while weaving a fairly complex web of life stories and sneaking in some social commentary.

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Da Vinci 1.0 AIO

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- Built-in Scanning Functionality
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- USB 2.0 | Windows/Mac support
- 2.0MP Camera & Laser Diode Module



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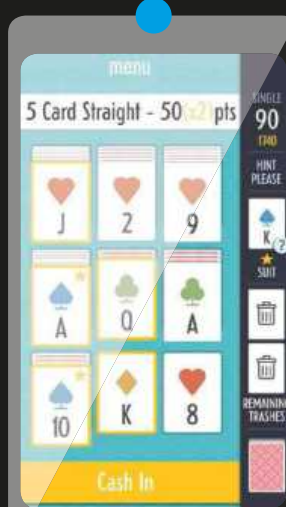
App:roved

FOR
KILLING
TIME

● Sage Solitaire

This one takes the card game that devoured a billion hours of your time on ancient PCs and rethinks it for mobile. The result is a sort of poker/solitaire mash-up. Further strategy comes from bonus points under each pile, hands requiring cards from two rows, trashes that replenish after successful moves, and a multiplier hand. All of which makes this simple card game hugely compelling. The sole IAP removes ads and provides extra modes.

Stuff says ★★★★★
Free (R40 IAP) / iOS

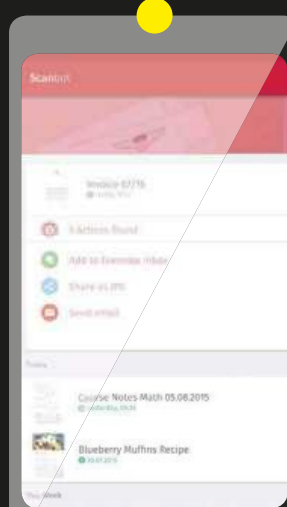


FOR
BACKING
UP DOCS

● Scanbot

Important documents have a tendency to get themselves lost, so a smartphone scanner is a wise investment. Scanbot's our current favourite. It does a great job scanning, edge-finding and auto-cropping. But buy the IAP and it gets really clever, helping you name files and anticipating where to save documents online. Even better: using character recognition, it picks out details — phone numbers, email addresses, URLs — and turns them into an actions menu for fast access.

Stuff says ★★★★★
Free (R70 IAP) / Android, iOS



FOR
SUPER
DOODLING

● Paper

We suspect this update will annoy some people. Paper used to be a simple iPad version of expensive journals — all sleek and swish. Now it's an explosion of digital sticky notes, combining photos, sketches, checklists and drawn diagrams. If you've a minimalism fetish, have a cry in the corner; for the rest of us, this update — which now also brings Paper to iPhone — is fast and efficient, and full of great ideas: swipe to style, photo spotlights, and shape correction for scribbled charts.

Stuff says ★★★★★
Free / iOS

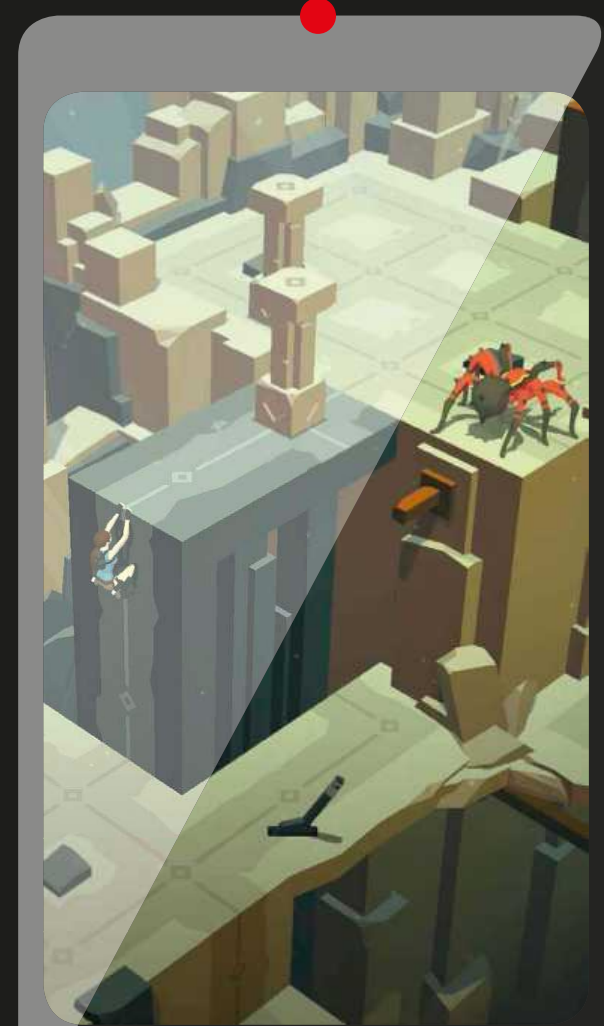


FOR
BRAINY
GAMING

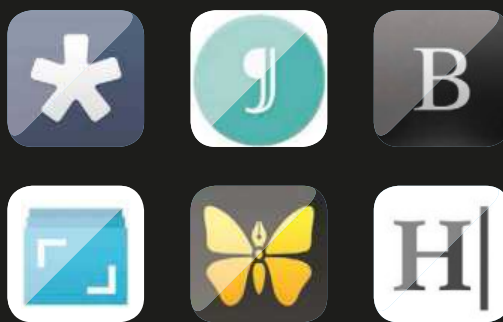
● Lara Croft Go

Our favourite tomb raider has fared poorly on mobile, but *Go* is an eye-opening combination of exploration and puzzling. Visually, the minimal geometric forms recall *Monument Valley*, as does the clever nature of the challenges. Lara appears to be raiding ruins constructed by those with a penchant for blocky architecture, sliding platforms and death traps. The difficulty curve is slight, but the experience is so captivating that you'll love every moment.

Stuff says ★★★★★
R70 / Android, iOS

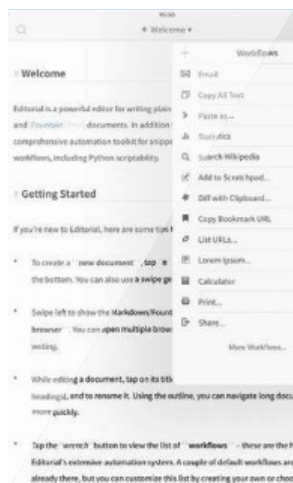


Mini meme



WRITE, YOU LOT!

With the iPad Pro and Google's new Pixel C promising to make tablets as good for typing as laptops, let's take a look at the best writing apps



● Editorial

A desktop-class productivity app for writers, Editorial does the usual stuff (Markdown, previews, cloud save) and adds heavily customisable templates, snippets and workflow/automation tools. The downside: it's not on desktop. But get a decent keyboard for your iPad and perhaps you'll simply abandon writing on a PC.

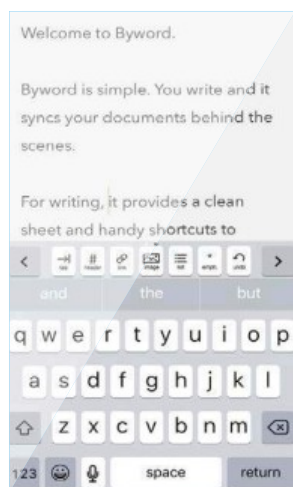
Stuff says ★★★★★
R140 / iOS



● JotterPad

The best pure text editor for Android, JotterPad gives you a simple, streamlined interface that ensures you concentrate on your writing. It includes Markdown support and a bunch of alternative typefaces; pay for the extras and you get typewriter scrolling, Markdown previews, syntax highlighting and snapshot saves.

Stuff says ★★★★★
Free / Android



● Byword

There are loads of minimal text editors for iOS, but Byword is our favourite. The app is fast and simple to use, with a pleasing interface and handy features such as a Markdown keyboard bar that can be switched for document statistics. A single IAP adds the means to publish your writing to blogs and Evernote.

Stuff says ★★★★★
R85 / iOS



● Journey

Some writing is mostly about capturing moments, even if the text is eventually edited and transformed into something else. Journey is a superb diary-based editor, offering word count, photo entry and weather/motion tracking. Add the cash IAP and you get Markdown support too. iOS users should check out the similar Day One.

Stuff says ★★★★★
Free / Android



● Ulysses

Ulysses is far more than a text editor – it's a home for all your writing. Texts in your library can be searched, split, combined and transformed into PDFs, web pages and ebooks. The Markdown editor is also excellent, and the app astonishingly mirrors its equally impressive OS X desktop cousin in almost every way.

Stuff says ★★★★★
R280 / iPad



● Hemingway

This spellchecker for style ensures your writing has focus. Paste text into the web app and hard-to-read sentences are flagged, along with unnecessary words and instances of passive voice. It suggests alternatives, and congratulates you for not using adverbs – because adverbs are, apparently, evil. Don't believe everything Hemingway tells you.

Stuff says ★★★★★
Free / web

Fantastic thrifty fox

It's not often a new budget phone really grabs our attention, so what makes the Wileyfox Swift so special?

R2650 / store.orange.com/za

■ There's a whiff of OnePlus magic about the Wileyfox Swift. This new contender has put together a R2 650 phone that crams in the specs you might have to pay almost R3 000 for elsewhere. An extra R350 will buy the Moto G, which is better in parts, but this is still a red hot bargain.

■ The Swift is similar in style and feel to the Nexus 5 (the old one, not the new 5X). It's 9.4mm thick, so a bit less chunky than the Moto G. There's an embossed fox-head logo on the back, which peels off to reveal a removable battery and microSD slot, and the display is protected by Gorilla Glass 3.

■ The display is insanely bright, which means it's great in direct sunlight but a bit over the top indoors. It has a 5in/12.7cm 720p screen, (like the Moto G), which is big enough for decent gaming and, while not 1080p, still pretty sharp.

■ The Swift runs Cyanogen 12.1, which means you can fiddle with the look and interface a lot more than with a regular Android phone. After all our mucking about with it, though, we ended up back at the rather stylish default settings.

■ Performance is generally good too, with almost none of the lag we've seen recently in some cheaper Androids. This is mostly down to the 2GB RAM and Snapdragon 410 chip Wileyfox has packed into the Swift – a lot of power for a R2 700 phone.

Techspecs

Screen 5in/12.7cm 1280x720

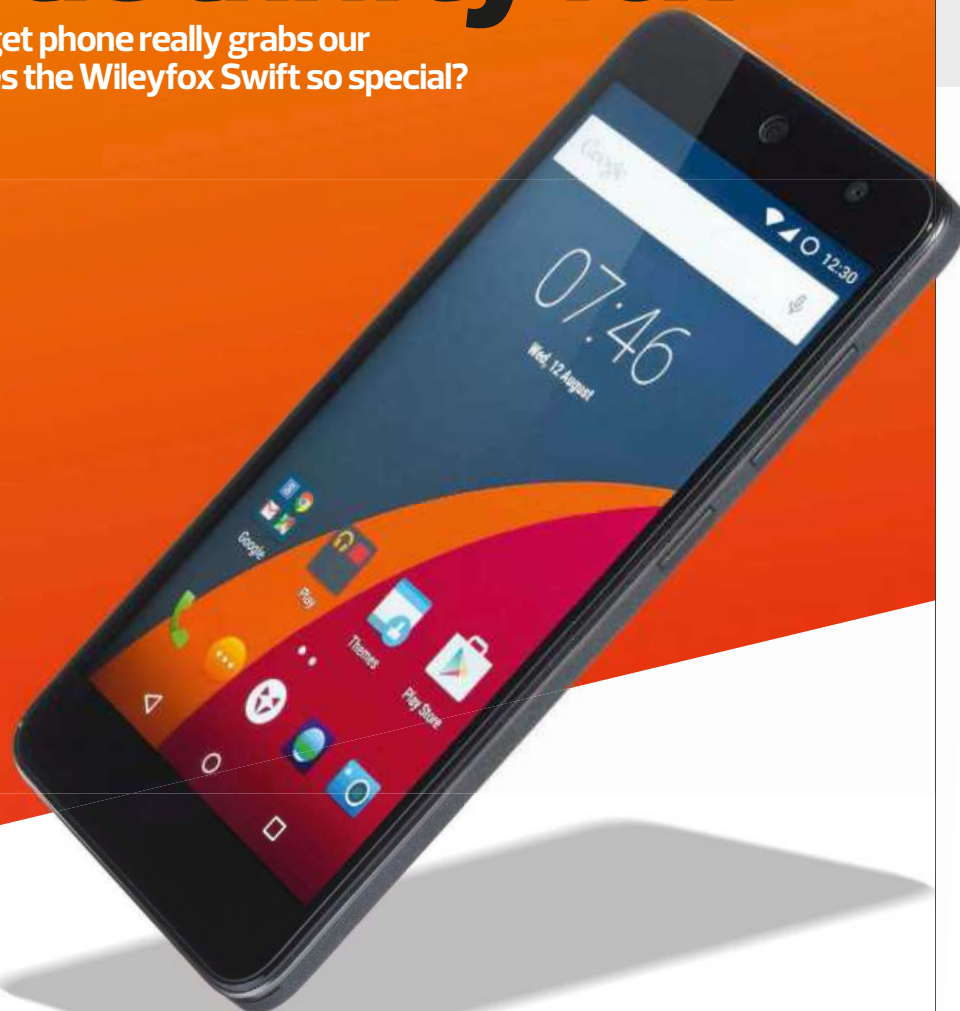
Processor Quad-core Snapdragon 410

OS Cyanogen 12.1 **RAM** 2GB **Storage**

16GB (microSD to 32GB) **Cameras**

13MP rear, 5MP front **Dimensions**

141mmx71mmx9.4mm, 135g



■ Great fox-pic-tations

The camera's sensor and lens are streets ahead of other budget Androids, and in good lighting it's excellent. Low light and HDR modes are let down by clunky image processing, though.



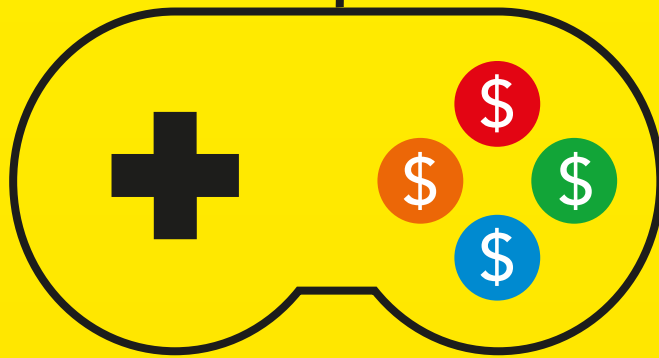
■ It'll last a good Wile

You'll get a good day's use out of the Swift, and some spare change off a charge. It'll last for about nine hours of looped video, which is just a bit less than the latest Moto G.

STUFF SAYS This brand new mega-value fox is almost a match for the Moto G ★★★★★☆

Wileyfox has its priorities in order – we're pretty impressed

You can try to build a brand by getting rappers to use your product while sauntering stylishly out of a club... but we prefer Wileyfox's way. With the Swift it has quietly introduced a tremendous bargain of a phone. It's not often a new budget phone brand arrives and really grabs our attention – making the price as low as possible rarely works – but the Wileyfox Swift is something special.



GET RICH PLAYING VIDEO GAMES

Gaming is the world's fastest-growing spectator sport, and the prize money is rising with it. We go inside an eSports team to find out what it takes to be a pro

F

or many gamers, the idea of watching someone else play is a little too close to the hours we spent being frustrated to tears by a console-hogging brother. But the new age of eSports is making this idea as dated as dusty game cartridges. It's propelling computer games up towards the previously unimaginable status of being the world's biggest spectator sport.

Don't believe us? Consider the fact that more people tuned into the *League Of Legends* World Championship final on Twitch.tv than the number of strawberry-scoffing tennis fans who watched the 2015 Wimbledon final on the BBC... or the

reality that there are now 134 million eSports viewers worldwide.

And it's not just audiences that are exploding like a well-aimed plasma grenade. In April, Jordan Spieth took home \$1.8m for winning The Masters golf tournament, one of traditional sport's most prestigious trophies. Four months later, a five-man team called Evil Geniuses picked up a cheque for \$6.6m, equivalent to \$1.3m each, at *DOTA 2*'s 'The International' Championship. And all without having to use a stick to hit a ball out of a sandpit.

DREAM SPIRIT

With so many people watching and so much money up for grabs, we headed to one of the few UK-based ►

A BRIEF HISTORY OF eSPORTS

Milestones on the path to R84 million winner's cheques

1980



Space Invaders Championship

The first ever large-scale gaming competition. 10,000 people from across the US competed for the Asteroids cocktail table prize.

2000



World Cyber Games

South Korea created the gaming equivalent of the Olympics. It had everything: the big arena, lavish opening ceremony and medals.

2004



Major League Gaming National Championships

The first major competition to focus on console games. It now includes PC titles.

2011



Twitch

This Amazon-owned site allows people to watch tournaments and is ranked fourth for peak internet traffic in the US.

2013



Pro gamers become 'athletes'

Canadian player Danny 'Shiphtur' Le made history by gaining a US P-1A visa, for 'Internationally Recognized Athletes'.

eSports tournaments to find out what all the fuss is about. DreamHack is a Swedish eSports organisation that is massively popular in its home country – over there, the finals are broadcast on SVT1, Sweden's equivalent of BBC One. Its first UK event was held at the Copper Box Arena in London's Olympic Park, and centred around Valve's *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive*, a team-based PC shooter played by an average of over 600,000 people a day. On offer to those who enter: a prize fund of \$40,000, with \$20,000 awarded to the winning team. Not bad for a weekend's work.

One team hoping to win the top prize was Team Dignitas, one of the ten best *Counter-Strike* outfits in the world. The team started out ten years ago when two *Battlefield 1942* teams merged together, and it now has a total of 47 players competing in nearly all the major eSports games and events. They're managed by Michael 'Odee' O'Dell, a Brit who was once a professional gamer himself. He's in charge of pretty much everything – getting the team from tournament to tournament, training them in between events, even sending out the yellow and black Team Dignitas merchandise that fans can buy online. And now he's helping us shadow the players as they battle their way through the four teams that stand between them and the \$20,000 prize.

KIT AND MISS

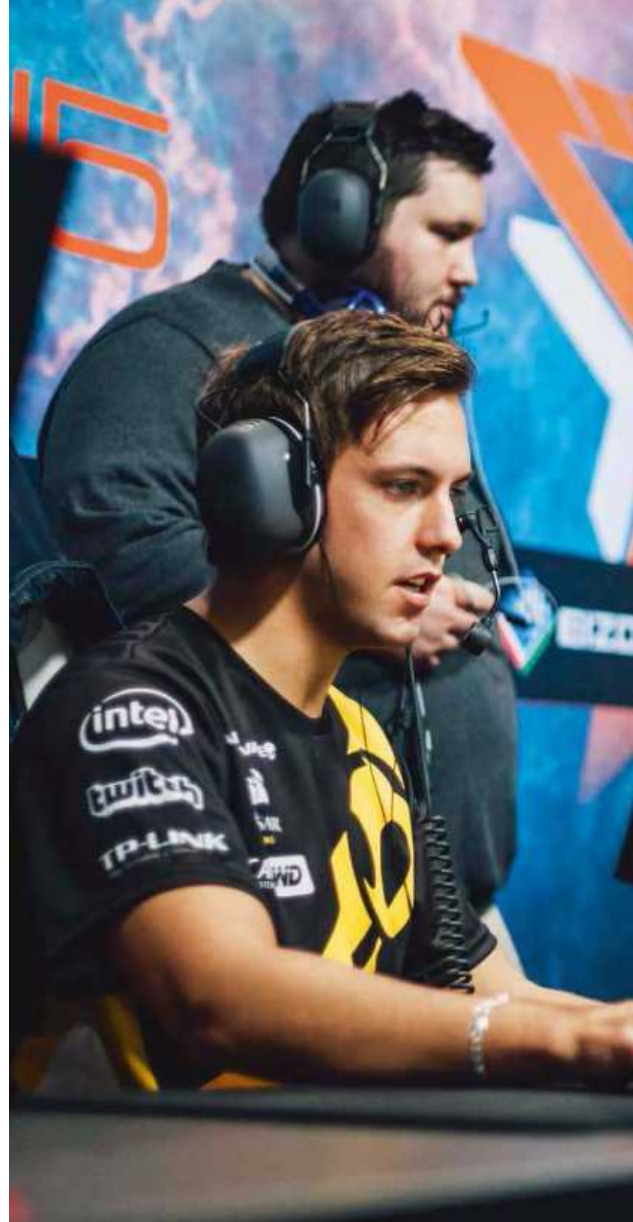
When we first meet Team Dignitas, they're half an hour away from their first-round battle against the Australian team Renegades. They're exactly as you'd imagine a team of young professional gamers: quiet and slightly awkward, but also polite and disarmingly honest. "No flame, but there are better monitors than the ones we're using here," complains Markus Kjaerbye, the youngest member of the team, as if he's firing out an angry Reddit post. He's spent 30 minutes shooting bots on the DreamHack monitors provided by Elizo, but he's used to practising ten hours a day on team sponsor Iiyama's screens. In eSports competitions, the computers and monitors are provided by the organisers to make things fair, but you can understand Kjaerbye's frustration – it's like making Lionel Messi swap the Adidas boots he trains in for a pair of flip-flops.

Despite their complaints, Team Dignitas go on to win two out of their three first-day games, ensuring passage into the semi-finals on the second day. Watching them live, it doesn't take long before we're being drawn into the thrill of it all – unconsciously slapping our foreheads when someone misses, or applauding the perfect headshot. Team Dignitas, meanwhile, appear completely emotionless – their intense concentration broken only by the occasional fist-bump from team captain Mathias Lauridsen after a victorious round.

THAT WAS LIQUID SNIPING!

It helps that the production standards of events like DreamHack are as good as anything you'd see on TV. Games like *Counter-Strike* have evolved to allow broadcasters access to instant replays and tactical diagrams – things you'd see if you were watching football on Sky Sports. But the real stars

"**COUNTER-STRIKE** WILL BE ON TV IN 2016"



are the commentators, who talk at about 250 words a minute about every element of the game, offering a level of insight that's lacking from much of the traditional sports punditry on TV. In fact, it's endearing how little concession they make to newbies. Listening to them is like watching your first episode of *The Wire* – you probably won't understand all the words they're using, but you kind of just absorb it anyway.

One of these commentators is Richard Lewis, a journalist who fell into commentating through an early love of eSports. Lewis believes that eSports is on the cusp of a major sea change; one that will see huge sponsors replacing PC component manufacturers and mainstream broadcasters showing events instead of Twitch. "What I'm worried about is big TV stations coming in and dictating to us how things need to be done," he says. "I think *Counter-Strike* will be on mainstream TV in early 2016. In a couple of years we will get pushed out by the mainstream guys."

In many ways, what Lewis is talking about is already happening: Team Dignitas is signed to sports agency IMG, which also manages the careers of Novak Djokovic and the Williams sisters.

LOSING ALL DOPE

The need to become legitimate to a mainstream audience is eSports' biggest challenge, particularly ►



SAFE AS MOUTSES... THE TEAM DIGNITAS GAMING ARSENAL

THE HEADSET



Corsair H1500

Communication is vital for pro gamers, so a well-made headset with a good boom mic is an absolute must. The H1500 also offers 7.1 Dolby Surround sound processing, meaning players can hear the precise direction of gunfire and grenade drops.

R1200 / evetech.co.za

THE MOUSE



Corsair Sabre Team Dignitas Edition

The team has its own mouse: you can change the 8200dpi laser sensor to be more or less sensitive and there are tweakable RGB lighting zones, eight buttons with Omron switches and a 1000Hz USB refresh rate.

R1050 (import) / corsair.com

THE KEYBOARD



Corsair K70

Pro gamers swear by mechanical keyboards, as the keys are smooth for easy double and triple taps, and they're durable as hell. Cherry MX Red switches are considered the best, and Corsair has created contoured and textured WASD and 1-6 keys.

R2 400 / evetech.co.za

THE SCREEN



Iiyama GB2488HSU-B1

This monitor is tailor-made for pro eSports players. The most important feature is response time – only 1ms, so there's basically no delay in the game and what the player sees. It's also an incredibly versatile monitor, with DisplayPort, DVI and HDMI inputs.

R2 550 (import) / iiyama.com

IT'S NOT ALL COUNTER- STRIKE...

Not too handy with a sniper rifle? These elite games could make your eSports millions:

HEROES



League Of Legends

The most popular PC game in the world is free to play, but *LoL*'s incredible depth makes it perfect for eSports. Its Championship series runs all year round, and last year the final was watched by 27 million people.

BALLS



FIFA

Yes, all those weekends playing *FIFA* online might have been time well spent. *FIFA* isn't anywhere near as lucrative as the top titles, but you can still win the Interactive World Cup – last year's winner picked up \$20,000.

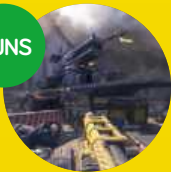
TROLLS



DOTA 2

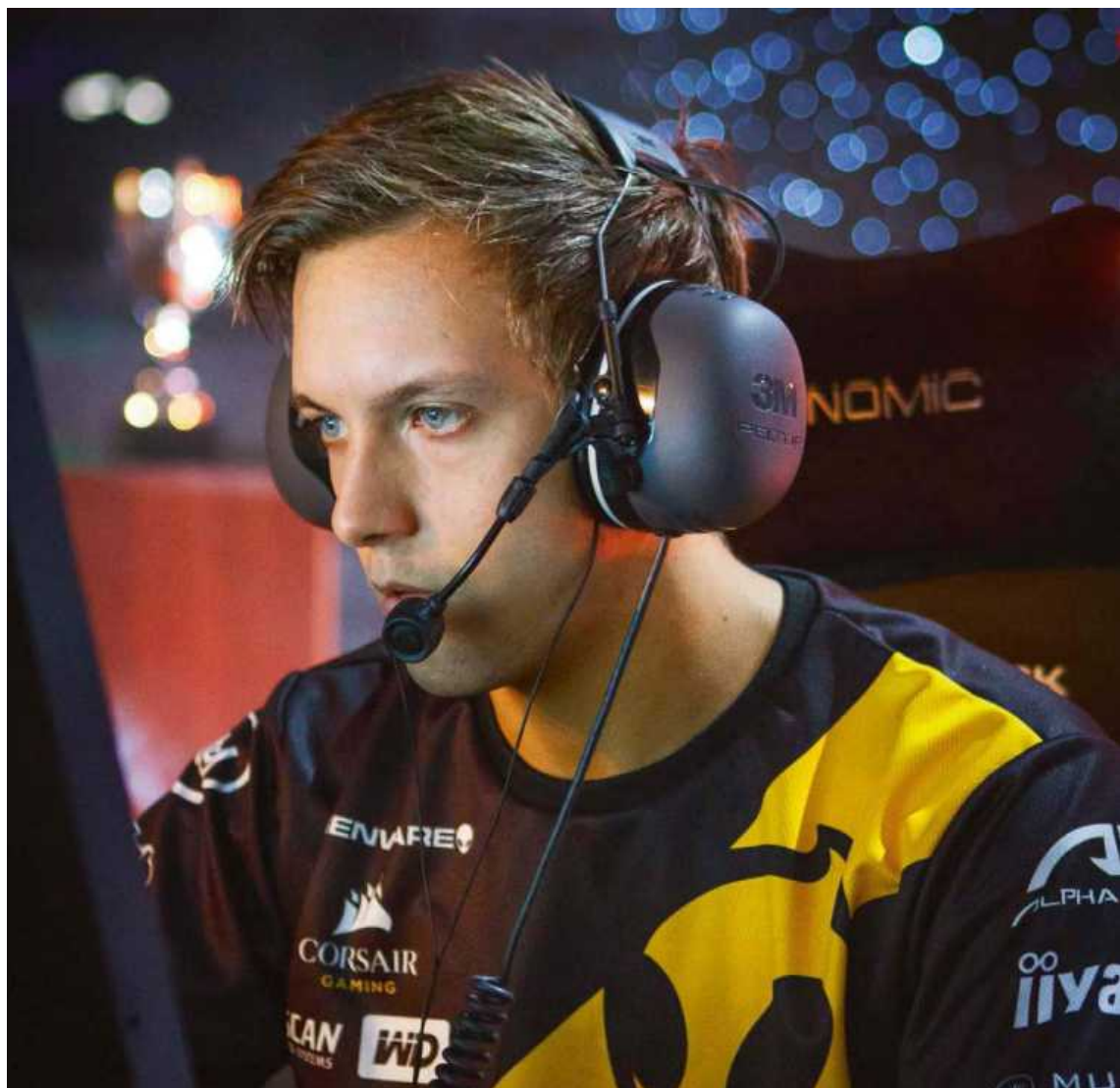
The prize pools for the *Defense Of The Ancients* sequel are the biggest in eSports, funded by players buying in-game items. At 'The International' 2015 the total prize fund reached \$18.4m, the winner taking over a third of that.

GUNS



Call Of Duty

CoD has grown massively over the last couple of years to overtake *Halo* as the console eSports shooter of choice. Thanks to support from publisher Activision, the game is easy to broadcast and commentate on.



as that audience is fragmented across different games, events and locations. The lack of a FIFA-like world governing body is probably a good thing given football's allegations of mysterious brown paper envelopes, but it also means there aren't universal checks in place to prevent cheating, match fixing, and more recently, doping allegations.

CS: GO player Kory 'Semphis' Friesen went on record recently saying that Adderall use was rife among professional players entering major competitions. A psychostimulant usually prescribed to treat ADHD, Adderall can be abused by people who want to concentrate for long periods of time – which perfectly describes pro gamers.

Odey plays down the effectiveness of these stimulants, although he says he welcomes the idea of random drug testing in eSports. "I'm sure doping

goes on but I've not seen it, and I don't want to," he says. "That said, I've always wanted random drug tests. I want the arena to be fair for everyone."

So far, only the Electronic Sports League has laid out a testing policy – it will run random saliva tests at its competitions, with penalties ranging from deductions to prize money and tournament points, to disqualification and up to a two-year ban.

TOUGH AT THE TOP

While playing *Counter-Strike* for a living sounds fun, the reality is that the number of professional spots available is about as limited as Formula One driver seats. There are 16 full-time professional *Counter-Strike* teams – with five players per team, that means there are roughly 80 people in the world who can call playing it a job. Compare that with how many professional footballers there are in England and Wales alone – roughly 4500 – and you can see how rare professional gaming jobs are.

It's also a classic catch-22 situation: if you want to compete at the top level, you need to be able to quit your job to practise, but you can't quit your job unless you're being paid by a professional outfit like Team Dignitas. LGB Female is one of the few eSports teams made up of women, but they all have full-time jobs or university studies as well. "We're working

"I'M SURE
DOPING GOES
ON IN ESPORTS"

HOW TO BECOME AN ESPORTS PRO

STEP ONE

Choose your weapon

Specialisation is key if you want to make money. The most popular games with the biggest prize pools are *DOTA 2*, *League Of Legends* and *StarCraft II*, but *FIFA* and *World Of Tanks* are less competitive yet still have tournaments with decent prizes.

STEP TWO

Watch the pros

Simply going on Twitch can be highly educational. "You learn by watching the pros," says Joakim Karlsson, an amateur *Super Smash Bros* player with big ambitions. "At big events, I might get to play against a pro and learn from them directly."

STEP THREE

Find some teammates

The big shooters and MOBA games are all played in teams. Head to eSports events to find people to pair up with. "There are 17 million people playing *Counter-Strike* alone, so you're bound to meet someone you click with," says LGB's Aurora Lyngdal.

STEP FOUR

Get livestreaming

Livestreaming can bring in revenue to help you expand, according to Tom 'Syndicate' Cassell, the first Twitch user to hit 1m subscribers. "It's easier to get noticed if you're livestreaming," he says, "and it's much better to do it live than put it on YouTube."

STEP FIVE

Get scouted

As some point you'll need to join a pro team, with coaching – a role Odee performs with Team Dignitas. "One of our players kept missing shots," he says, "and we realised it was because he was breathing too fast. We taught him techniques to control it."



from 8am to 4pm and then you get home, have a quick dinner and you're playing from 6pm until late in the evening," says team captain Aurora Lyngdal. Inevitably, female players also have to face discrimination. "There's a mentality that girls can't play," admits Lyngdal. "Sometimes there's a feeling that the fans don't want us to be there. That mentality needs to go away and then a lot more women will come to the fore."

She thinks it will take another couple of years for LGB Female to be competing in the same tournaments as her male counterparts. But when they do break through, they'll at least be competing in the same tournaments as the boys, unlike most sports, which are segregated by gender.

THE HALO EFFECT

Sadly for Team Dignitas at DreamHack London, they fell short of winning the \$20,000 prize, being knocked out in the semi-finals by their arch rivals Team SoloMid. Their consolation prize was \$3000 – not a bad haul, but also not a lot to split between five people and a manager.

Still, the team left in high spirits – it had another tournament to enter with a much higher prize pool later in the week. Performing well in tournaments is also more about satisfying sponsors than winning

"SOME FANS
THINK **GIRLS**
CAN'T PLAY"

prizes – SuperData research estimates four fifths of all eSports revenue comes from sponsorship.

As we tried to talk to Team Dignitas about their defeat, we were interrupted by a group of fans wanting autographs. Mostly they had T-shirts or notepads to sign, sometimes it was a tattered mousepad, but the players dutifully signed whatever was handed to them, usually without a word uttered between either party. It was noticeable that one member in particular, the Bieber-esque Markus Kjaerbye, got plenty of attention from female fans.

We brought up the issue of groupies, but he was coy and tried to change the topic. Overhearing our conversation, his teammate Andreas Lindberg made a gesture suggesting the 17-year-old does OK with the ladies. Clearly, getting to play games all day is just one perk of being an eSports star. **S**

Disc o' tech

Google's new vinyl-styled Chromecast Audio lets you play Spotify and other services on any old hi-fi

R800 / zeekonline.co.za

In case you're one of the four people who didn't buy Google's original Chromecast last year, we'll explain: it looks like a USB stick, but you plug it into the HDMI port in the back of your TV. Then you open Netflix or YouTube (or a lot of other apps) on your phone/tablet, press the little 'Cast' button that magically appears, and boink – the thing you want to watch appears on your TV.

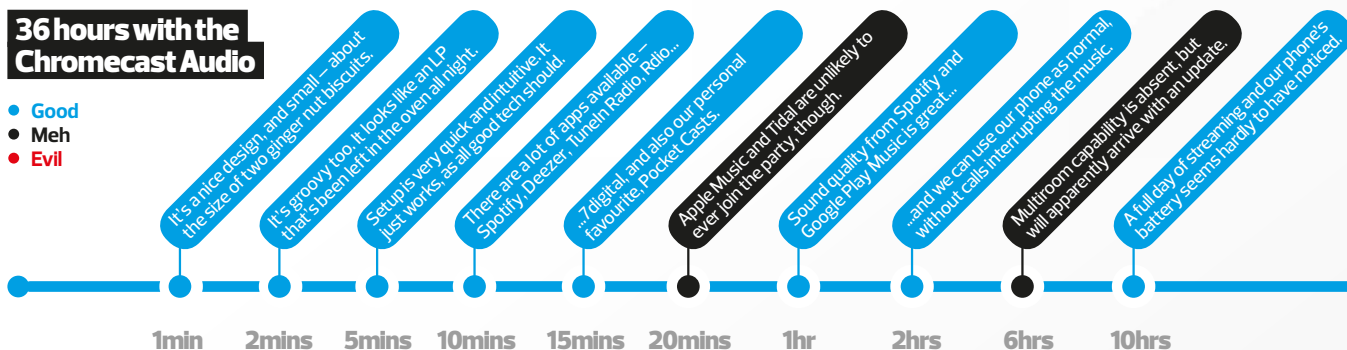
The really clever thing about Chromecast is that it only looks like you're streaming TV from your phone; in fact, the device is playing it directly from the internet, which saves your phone's data and battery and makes everything faster and smoother. It's cheap, easy to use and cleared the field of other streaming methods last year, selling over 20 million units.

And now, Chromecast Audio has arrived to do the same to your hi-fi. Plug one of these into any audio setup, open up Spotify, and you have a connected stereo for R800. Yes sir, but can it boogie?



36 hours with the Chromecast Audio

- Good
- Meh
- Evil





1 Start me up

Setup requires the Chromecast app (Free, iOS / Android), and the whole process only takes a minute or so. For any remotely decent speakers, go into settings and check the 'High Dynamic Range' box, which dramatically increases the sound quality.

2 Simply the guest

Guest mode means people can play music on your Chromecast Audio without joining your Wi-Fi network. Thankfully, it's easy to turn this off once you decide that your guests have heard enough Kylie and they need to hear Tool's *Lateralus* all the way through again.

3 Caster of applets

In the Spotify app, a 'Devices Available' tab appears. You tap it, select the Audio, and you're away. In Google Play Music it's easier still, with a proper Cast button. You can also stream audio from a Chrome tab, which is great for SoundCloud, Last.fm or YouTube.

4 Wi-Fi wins in the stream

This is much better than streaming via Bluetooth. There's no interruption from calls, almost no battery drain, and your phone doesn't have to stay near the speaker. And unlike streaming via DLNA, you don't have to give up your phone's Wi-Fi connection.

5 Sweet phone audio-charger

Sound quality is great: the Audio streams at the highest bitrate the app will allow, so with Spotify Premium set to 'auto' and a decent broadband connection, it'll stream at 320kbps. Using a browser, the quality varies with the source, but it's still very capable indeed.

The other new Chromecast

Google's TV streamer has also been updated, so do you need to rush out and buy a new one?



1 It looks nicer

It's a fancy design, but this won't make any difference to you because you'll only see it when you take it out of the box. It could have a picture of a naked Patrick McGoochan on it for all we care — once in use it disappears behind the TV.

2 It's faster

Loading a Netflix or YouTube show took less than 10 seconds on the old Chromecast, so while loading times have improved, you'd have to be an incredibly impatient person for this to matter. Still, there's almost no wait.

3 It's got good Wi-Fi

This is the real reason to consider upgrading: the new Chromecast has noticeably better Wi-Fi reception, which means it'll work much better for a second/bedroom TV that's further from your home's router.

4 Games and photos

Two other neat additions: Google Photos support means you can cast your snaps to your telly, and your phone becomes a controller for Android games. If you're a fan of the new Google Photos, it's worth a go.

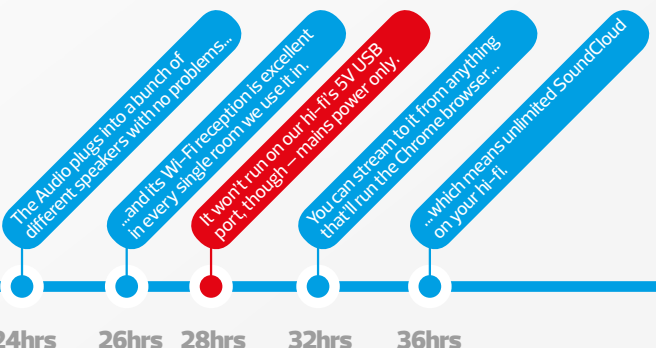
STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

If you already own a Chromecast there's no need to upgrade, but games and photos add new reasons to try one

This is so much more convenient than Bluetooth streaming — the connection happens in the app you're using, you don't waste your phone's battery and you can wander into another room without the music cutting out. Pair that with excellent sound quality and a nice, unobtrusive look, and you've got yourself a real winner.

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

It's simple, works with a huge variety of apps, costs as much as a handful of CDs and sounds great



A MONTH WITH THE APPLE iPhone 6S PLUS

Push it real good

We love the buzzing 3D Touch on the iPhone 6s, and it promises to be even more effective on a larger screen. But will the 6s Plus prove just too hefty to handle?

from R13 600 / apple.co.za



Live Photos, 3D Touch, a better snapper with new abilities: there's a lot to work with.

DAY 01

First, a confession: our mitts are not 6s Plus-sized. They're used to the 4.7in/12cm iPhone 6, because that's about as much phone as they can safely handle. It'll be a miracle if Apple's latest phablet survives this next month without caressing a pavement.

So why am we bothering with the 6s Plus? Because, on paper at least, it's the best iPhone. Unlike the 6s, it has a full HD 5.5in/14cm screen, an ample

2915mAh battery and optical image stabilisation (OIS) to help avoid blurry shots. Best of all, it seems to have been built for 3D Touch, the fancy feature that's meant to be the most revolutionary thing about the new iPhones.

This is (sort of) Apple's answer to the styluses of Samsung's Galaxy Note phones. It's a way of doing more with your screen and quickly navigate around

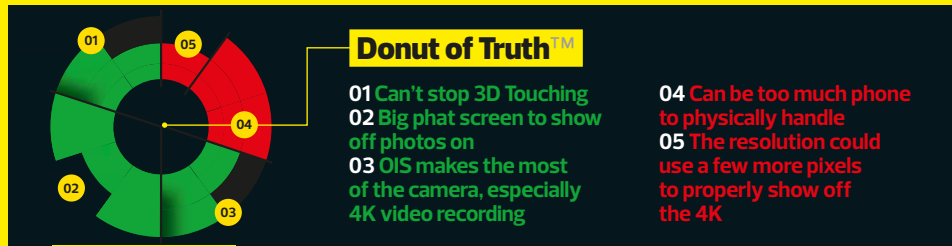
iOS 9. We've used 3D Touch's predecessor, Force Touch, in the Apple Watch and that ultra-thin MacBook, but this nifty bit of tech has been refined for the new phones. By firmly pressing down on your 6s Plus's screen, you can perform a variety of time-saving actions with 3D Touch. You can glance at the contents of an email, check the location of an address, tap on a quickfire shortcut to skip to an in-app action. Scrimping on a few swipes might not sound like a big deal, but they add up to quite a difference.

Another improvement that strikes you is the upgraded 12MP

camera. We're trigger-happy to say the least when it comes to taking iPhone photos, and this device has really brought out the Instagram addict in us. The test shots we've taken are bright, detailed and full of natural tones – much better than what you'd get from the 8MP snapper of the iPhone 6 and 6 Plus.

Colour replication is especially spot on. We hate it when we upload photos and they end up looking oversaturated, and completely unlike what we captured in the first place. That's not the case with the 6s Plus. So far, so good for this great, big lump of iPhone.

Scrimping on a few swipes with 3D Touch might not sound like a big deal, but they add up to make a difference



Tech specs

Screen 5.5in/14cm
Retina HD
1920x1080
(401ppi)
OS iOS 9
Processor
Apple A9
Cameras 12MP
with OIS rear,
5MP front
Battery
2915mAh
RAM 2GB
Storage
16/64/128GB
Dimensions
158x7.8x7.3mm
Weight 192g



DAY 07

Although it's nearly slipped out of our hands on several spontaneous photo-taking occasions, the 6s Plus is still alive. Thanks to its improved snapper, we've taken a bunch of killer photos with a load of detail that the former iPhone wasn't able to capture. OIS really makes a difference when it comes to shooting indoors and at night. By reducing the effect of camera shake, it's able to capture more light and take a clearer photo. This is either great or terrible news for fans of drunken bar snaps, we can't figure out which.

Either way, these photos are a great way to show off what the 6s Plus is made of. And so are the preloaded lock screen Live Wallpapers that you can make dance with the help of 3D Touch.

DAY 13

We don't do Quick Actions as much as we should with 3D Touch, but we've completely embraced using it to preview emails, messages and photos. The world needs 3D Touch on more third-party apps, though. Neither YouTube nor Uber supports it right now, and it'd be handy if they did. *Asphalt 8* flows like silk thanks to the 6s Plus's blisteringly quick A9 processor,

but it would be amazing to vary the accelerator by pressing harder, just like you'd gun it in a real car.

Speaking of touch, Touch ID on this monster phone is blazingly fast.

DAY 20

After three weeks into our time with the 6s Plus, we're not looking forward to giving up its bumper battery life. Even though the new Plus has a smaller battery than last year's model, it's still able to last us through the day and then some, especially if we activate iOS 9's Low Power Mode.

But that big battery comes with a caveat: it takes a long time to charge. When we're in a rush and the battery's low, we often find ourselves wishing we had the faster iPhone 6s to work with.

DAY 28

Right, it's decision time. Do we stick with the big, beautiful 6s Plus or regress to the old iPhone 6?

Although we might have got used to the 6s Plus's size, it's still an awkward familiarity. Our commute has become a nerve-shredding experience. So although the Plus is a big deal, we'd still choose the smaller 6s. Because a dead phone is no use to us, no matter how beautiful its display is.

STUFF SAYS

An immersive experience thanks to that giant screen, but only if you can handle it

★★★★☆

Media hoard

Hungry for new thrills? A spiky geek-trepreneur, a fun(ky) side project and some original sci-fi are *Stuff's* picks of the month

WATCH

Steve Jobs_cinema

Two studios, two directors and three stars: writer Aaron Sorkin's version of the Steve Jobs story passed through a lot of hands before arriving on our screens. With Danny Boyle behind the camera, Michael Fassbender steps in front of it as the Apple icon, portrayed during three pivotal product launches: the Macintosh (1984), the NeXT 'Cube' (1988) and the iMac (1998).

Unfolding like a stage play, the film shows Jobs to be the centre of a tornado of professional and personal drama. He battles with employees, the mother of his child... and the press, who clash with his perfectionism, jealousy and borderline God complex.

Fassbender is tightly wound and single-minded: his conviction overcomes his lack of physical fit for the part. Indeed, most of the cast seem to bring their best to the screen, with the ever excellent Kate Winslet keeping the show running as his assistant, and a heartfelt turn from Seth Rogen as Steve Wozniak.

With its sharp-tongued dialogue and backstage set pieces, *Steve Jobs* is too orchestrated to be the definitive take on a man's life or career, but it's obvious from early on that this is a portrait rather than an analysis. Perhaps appropriately given the subject, Boyle's film is slightly flawed but fascinating nonetheless.

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★



Terminator Genisys

_Blu-ray, DVD, VOD

Arnie takes some time off making meerkat ads to resurrect the T-800, but he's no longer the main event: Sarah Connor and a time-hopping Kyle Reese take centre stage in their fight against an OS that'll enslave all of humanity. It could be a critique of our reliance on tech, but that might be a bit generous.

STUFF SAYS ★★☆☆☆



Entourage

_Blu-ray, DVD, VOD

Fans of the TV show will know what to expect from the film: a vapid, silly, dirty fantasy fulfilment about a Hollywood A-lister and his three best mates fooling around with fast cars and easy women. It is, though, lacking the charm of the best episodes, and the roll call of cameos is desperate. It would get three stars, but Piers Morgan is in it.

STUFF SAYS ★☆☆☆☆

LISTEN



Return To The Moon

_El Vy

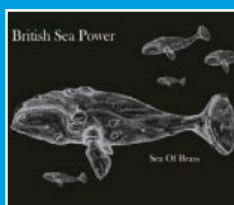
The National are many things, but cheery is not one of them. No wonder frontman Matt Berninger fancied teaming up with Menomena's Brent Knopf for a record full of rasping hi-hat claps and grooves you can pull shapes to. Even if *Return To The Moon* doesn't always live up to its funkadelic promise, it's a lot of fun.

Unleashed from his sourpuss straightjacket,

Berninger flies into full-on esoteric mode. Songs like *Paul Is Alive* and *Silent Ivy Hotel* are peppered with wry one-liners, underlined by teasing organ riffs and licks of ghoulish synth.

You can almost hear the bandmates mucking about, asking, "Will we get away with this?" They absolutely do — so much so that a second outing feels like an effervescent necessity.

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★



Sea Of Brass

_British Sea Power

Foliage-bothering indie heroes British Sea Power take their tuba-backed tour of the same name into the studio. *Decline Of...* era B-side *Heavenly Waters* gets an almost Morricone-esque twist, while 2013's *Machineries Of Joy* is augmented with brass stabs. One for completists rather than casual fans.

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★



Mythologies

_Cheatahs

Consisting of four different nationalities, Cheatahs neatly reflect the melting pot of their adopted hometown of London — and their music is similarly cut 'n' paste. With hints of a more urgent My Bloody Valentine and hooks worthy of The Strokes, *Mythologies* is a fuzz-laden journey through their various influences.

STUFF SAYS ★★★☆☆

READ



THE PROMISE OF THE CHILD

The Promise Of The Child

_Tom Toner

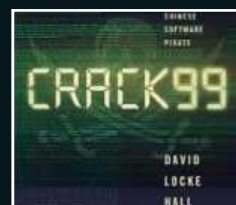
Hard sci-fi is all about new worlds and huge, vertiginous ideas. Even so, it's rare to come across something as original as this debut novel, set 12 000 years from now.

Humanity has branched out, diversifying into different species, from 15-foot giants to elflike pygmies. Planets have been hollowed out and

lit from inside with tiny captive stars. And some 21st-century humans are still alive, kept going by lost medical tech. Many of them have gone mad, but a few fight for control of their dwindling empire.

It's a slightly disjointed read at times, but it will leave you with a myriad of interesting questions.

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★



Crack99

_David Locke Hall

The true inside tale of a Chinese software pirate's takedown by US agents is made more zingy by the dodgy stuff in question being professional and/or military in nature (think software for controlling satellites, not *Flight Simulator X*). Despite the crisp writing, this is only for fans of real espionage and legal affairs.

STUFF SAYS ★★★☆☆



Star Wars: The Original Topps Trading Card Series, Volume One

_Gary Gerani

Star Wars collectables tend to be worth more than the catering budget of one of Jabba the Hutt's knees-ups. This anthology contains over 500 pages of the sought-after Topps cards and stickers. One for committed star-nerds.

STUFF SAYS ★★★☆☆

PS4, PS3, Xbox One, Xbox 360 / destinythegame.com

Destiny: The Taken King

This is the biggest update to the *Destiny* universe yet... but at the price of a full game, does it offer enough to bring back lapsed Guardians?

We might just be *Destiny* addicts. We'd rather not share our total playtime stats, but let's just say we've more than dabbled in this FPS/RPG hybrid. From the very first mission, set in a battlefield crawling with dying Cabal warriors, it is clear that *The Taken King's* story is light years ahead of the original.

Bungie's injected a good deal of variety too, with tons of quests to keep players occupied, plus new strikes and one new raid. The satisfaction you'll get from

working out all the intricacies, and eventually coming together with your team like a well-oiled rifle, is really quite something.

The real star of *The Taken King* is a new area, the Dreadnaught. It's a gigantic labyrinth of a ship with ominous dark hallways littered with skulls and bones, secret tunnels, and plenty of enemies to sink your bullets into.

The game also introduces three new subclasses to the *Destiny* universe – a Void-based Hunter, an Arc damage Warlock and a solar

Titan, adding a fun new element as each class has its own quest in which they discover their new powers. The Sunbreaker Titan is probably the most notable, as it offers a ranged super-attack and can summon the devastating Hammer of Sol. All the weapons look and feel excellent, and even the basic blue and green items pack a punch.

So is *The Taken King* worth R500? For loyal fans, absolutely. The new content, mechanical tweaks and quests are sure to

make their inner Guardians very happy. As for those fans who drifted away? If you left simply because you ran out of things to do, it's definitely worth a look. But if you've always been immune to *Destiny's* grind for loot, that may still be the case.

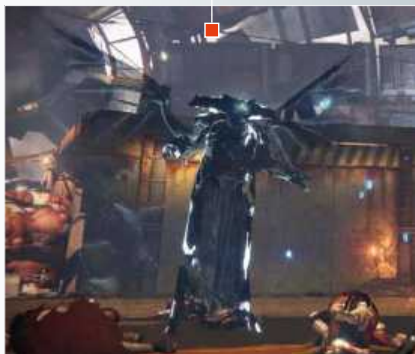
It's tough, and maddeningly frustrating at times, but when those big bosses fall and those rewards appear on your screen, it's all worth it. This is *Destiny* at its absolute best. See you on the Dreadnaught.

STUFF SAYS Bungie has nailed it – we can't wait to see where we're flying off to next ★★★★★



We have no idea what that Fallen vandal is doing on the floor. Pure laziness.

A flaming hammer of Thor vs Sith lightning. So freaking metal, it hurts.



RIP, Dinklebot

Peter Dinklage's Ghost has been replaced by voiceover veteran Nolan North. Despite Dinklage facing a lot of criticism for his delivery, we have to admit that we preferred him over North, who sounds a bit like a cheery children's TV presenter.

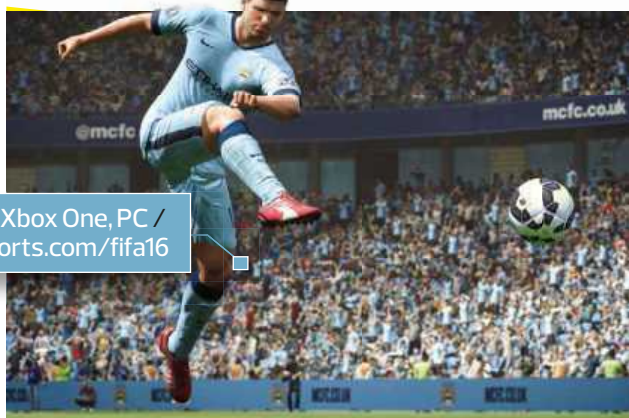
The story itself is engaging and sees players take on the Hive God Oryx. You're number one on his 'To Kill' list, thanks to the fact that you disposed of his son Crota in the last raid (he was asking for it). He's so displeased, in fact, that he's corrupted all sorts of enemy races into his personal army of 'Taken', who want nothing more than to end your existence. The Taken enemies are dark, glitchy versions of familiar foes, and I love them. They remind me a little of the Flood in *Halo*, although they don't look as grotesque.

Each Taken enemy has a set of unique abilities. Fallen Taken Captains, for example, can now move at about 1000km/h and shoot you with blinding waves of darkness. Then there's the Cabal Psions, who split in two when shot, or the darned Vex Hobgoblins that blast you with void cannons, forcing you to scream like a little girl.

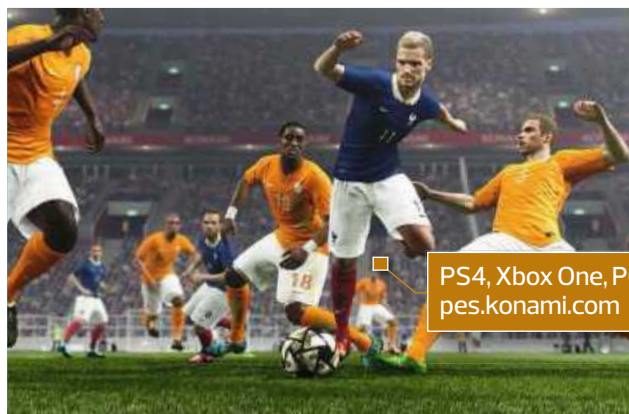
WE hammered through the main story in four hours, but that's by no means the entire pie, or indeed the main meaty filling, of *The Taken King*.

Match of the disc tray

When it comes to football simulations, *FIFA* has long had the edge over *Pro Evolution Soccer*. But when their 2016 editions go head to head, will the underdog bite back?



PS4, Xbox One, PC /
easports.com/fifa16



PS4, Xbox One, PC /
pes.konami.com

FIFA 16

vs

PES 2016

The first thing you'll notice about *FIFA 16* is a key one: it's harder to score goals.

In previous editions it was fairly easy to create space behind defences for attackers to occupy and then play passes into it. *FIFA 16*'s teams, however, hold their shape much more stubbornly. Neat one-touch passing and smart running are required to break through the lines.

Thankfully, EA has provided a new weapon to aid this: a driven ground pass, executed by holding R1/RB when you press the standard pass button. This plays the ball with much more force, making it harder for the opposition to intercept.

You might just need this aid to quick breaks, because teams don't give you long on the ball. Defenders are better at cutting out balls over the top, and goalies are off their line quicker than you can say 'sweeper keeper'.

EA has also added a piggy-in-the-middle drill to the pre-match mini-games. It's one worth

practising, as opposition players do seem more prone to making errors under pressure.

Pacey players seem less able to burn off their markers, but they can now use no-touch dribbling to get through instead, which involves holding L1/LB to literally stop touching the ball, tempting the defender into a tackle before bursting away into space. When you finally get it right it works brilliantly, allowing you to get half a yard on an opponent.

Arguably the biggest addition to *FIFA 16* is 12 national women's teams. The women's game is slightly less physical and the opposition doesn't press so intensively, so it feels a little more like last year's game... but hey, we gave that a five-star review.

Otherwise, this year's tweaks are perhaps more subtle than usual but this general tune-up is still welcome. It may well make it more frustrating, but also more rewarding when things click.

And by the time you do master it, it'll be time to do it all over again.

On the 20th anniversary of the franchise, *PES 2016* has stuck very firmly to its strengths — namely, goals. Nil-nil draws are the stuff of legend, while world-class strikes from West Glamorgan City (who you might think look a lot like Swansea) are commonplace. For the first time in ages, this makes it a genuine arcade-style alternative to *FIFA*'s simulator-esque charms.

Passing is fluid and razor sharp, encouraging creative, instinctive, attacking football — through-balls are particularly lethal and, unlike *FIFA*, it urges you to go for goal at every opportunity.

Defenders will infuriate and beguile you in equal measure, dribbling past three players in one movement before completely mistiming a header the next. Keeping a clean sheet is damn near impossible, but thankfully, so is getting booked or sent off. The slide tackle is more satisfying than ever, partly thanks to a reworked collision system, but

also because the referees are more lenient than Howard Webb at Old Trafford.

Each player is a unique specimen, meaning organising your team for an online match, or a world-beating side in Master League, feels not just important, but essential. We found ourselves entranced by the depth of the game's career mode.

Sure, it's irritating that you have to rename teams (unless you choose sides in La Liga, for instance, with whom *PES* has a licensing agreement), but online games are just as captivating as their offline counterparts. The game's matchmaking system also does an admirable job of finding a suitable partner.

Much like the real thing, then, *PES 2016* is a game of two halves. Licensing issues and defensive frailties mean it doesn't quite deliver the entire package. But the spirit of the game is here in spades, and just like it did in its heyday, *Pro Evo* places that spectacle above all else.

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★

A touch more challenging, but more rewarding to those who persevere

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★☆

Purists may scoff, but for thrillseekers and goal addicts, *PES* keeps hitting the target

JUST CAUSE 3



SET THE WORLD ON FIRE
01 DECEMBER 2015



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Xbox One, PS4 / rockband4.com

Rock Band 4

After a five-year absence from communal living rooms, Harmonix's party classic is back. But will its revival be more Limp Bizkit than Led Zeppelin?

Compared to the singular *Guitar Hero*, *Rock Band* has always been a more cooperative affair. It allows you to form a supergroup with your mates featuring drums, bass, guitar and vocals. This is probably the closest you'll get to headlining Soccer City or looking good in studded leather (in public, anyway).

However, at £5000 for its 'band in a box' bundle, *Rock Band 4*'s kit is expensive. Especially when you consider that games you play in person with others have virtually perished with the advent of *Call Of Duty* online.

Newcomers will find their fingers as nimble and accurate as a handful of soggy toast, but old-schoolers will undoubtedly be able to dive right in and feel at home. It's striking how familiar the whole arrangement feels. As before, all the instruments have been built to take a beating, even though the guitar still looks as though it's been lifted from a child's toy box. You'll be thankful for the sturdiness.

New to *Rock Band 4* is the freestyle solo feature, which allows

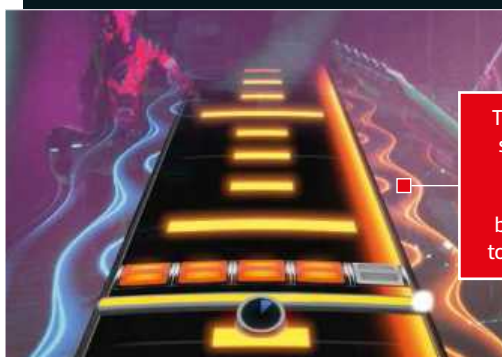
players temporary creativity. At a musically appropriate moment the pattern of blocks disappears and the guitar can be attacked however players see fit. It makes a welcome change, and translates even inarticulate slamming into something fairly audible.

Where *Rock Band 4* fails to meet expectations is in its repertoire of 60-odd new songs. Classic rock and a smattering of 'alt hits' is the order of the day and the selection is unlikely to surprise. In contrast, the upcoming *Guitar Hero Live* lists Royal Blood, Sleigh Bells and Haim, and will reportedly launch with a catalogue of hundreds online.

In the age of music streaming, and when co-op stalwarts like *Halo* are ditching split-screen play, *Rock Band 4* feels like an artefact from another time. There's fun to be had here soloing away in a state of inebriation, or if you can cajole enough friends together to strum along to The Who, Van Morrison and the like, but there's a host of more modern multiplayer experiences to be found online.



Each instrument is a challenge as they require different forms of coordination.



The freestyle solo feature provides a break from being a slave to the rhythm.

STUFF SAYS A fun throwback, but it won't provide much in the way of longevity ★★☆☆☆

4 OF THE BEST

Smarthome gadgets

Custom-built 'home automation' is a thing of the past — now you can robotify your place by adding a few bits of clever kit

Little brother

The 1080p camera has an excellent night mode, but unlike the Piper and Nest Cam you can't use its mic to remotely shoo your cat off the couch.

WORKS WITH...

The app's design is clean and intuitive, with an activity timeline and the option to add other people in your household so it only arms when the last person has left. It's a shame Canary doesn't yet talk to any other products or web services like IFTTT.



Base player

The down-firing light changes colour to let you know the mode (green for armed, yellow for disarmed). It's useful without being distracting.

in association with:

Telkom



Canary R3360 (import) / canary.is

What's the story?

Canary is the prettiest security cam we've ever seen. That might sound like being named a regional finalist in the 'best-looking bouncer' awards, but it's an important feature for a smarthome product that needs to be on permanent display to do its job.

Like its rivals Nest Cam and Piper, Canary promises to alert you to unwanted activity in your home by sending smartphone notifications,

along with live and recorded 1080p video, when it detects movement. It uses geo-fencing to automatically 'arm' itself when it recognises that you're out, and also packs sensors for pretty accurate measurements of your home's temperature, humidity and air quality.

All very impressive, though it's a features list that Canary doesn't (currently) live up to. The hardware is great, with its wide-angle camera serving up excellent video quality

even at night, and the manually controlled 90dB siren capable of rattling your windows. But software niggles mean it's currently more of a deterrent than a real burglar catcher.

Any good?

During our staged break-ins, its 'armed' mode (which enables motion-activated recording with mobile alerts) sometimes alerted us to movement within 30 seconds, but other times failed to

either record video or send us a notification.

We're sure these are early software niggles rather than terminal deal-breakers. And like the Nest Cam, we like the way Canary complements its free plan with a subscription option offering downloadable videos and month-long video histories. But its beta feel and lack of compatibility with other smarthome gadgets mean it's one to watch, rather than one to rush out and buy.

STUFF SAYS Handsome and promising, but too many software kinks ★★★★★



WORKS WITH...



The Yale's selling point is concealed in the battery compartment: a Z-Wave module that connects to a host of home tech, including SmartThings kit. With a little tinkering it can turn the lights on, set the heating or perform other magic when you open the front door.

Open sources

There are a number of ways to open it: type in a pin code, or use a key tag or card. You can also give visitors a code that expires after 24 hours.

My flat's flat

If the batteries die while you're out, you can get emergency power by holding a 9V battery to the two terminals on the bottom of the lock.

in association with:

TelkomYale Keyless Connected Smart Lock R2560 / saundersonsecurity.co.za

What's the story?

Smartlocks sound exciting, but so does being burgled, and not in a good way. So while there are flashier keyless locks, there is a lot to be said for Yale's solid history of not letting people into your house.

The back of this lock is a standard Yale nightlatch of the type you may already own, but the front is a touch-sensitive keypad that can be unlocked with a fob, card, code or – using an extra module – an app. It's

not hard to install – there's a handy measurement guide to help – although it does require you to drill two quite big holes in your door, so once you decide on it there's no going back.

Then you get to the manual. If you enjoy being enraged and confused, meet your new favourite book. As an internet user you're used to seeing coherent language and design sacrificed to technological advances, but this manual takes the freaking cake. It's the only

guide you have for navigating the lock's alien language of beeps and flashes, but it's badly written and contains important mistakes. We spent two hours figuring out the lock's settings and still unwittingly left a front door unlocked for several hours, at night, because Yale didn't employ a proper writer to compose and check its manual.

Any good?

Once you've gone into a fugue, eaten the useless manual and

then figured it out by trial and error, it's a good lock that has, thanks to its included Z-Wave module, the ability to work with other smarthome tech. We wouldn't trust it as the only lock on a front door, but the option to add and remove codes is neat as it means you can allow someone temporary access without having to get a new key cut. That said, a clearer user interface and simple app control are needed to make this a lock you'd properly call 'smart'.

STUFF SAYS Yale makes a great lock, but the 'smart' part needs work ★★★★★

Aurora domesticus

As well as coloured bulbs, you can also get Hue Lightstrips, lamps, ceiling lights, wireless dimmer switches... and cheaper white bulbs.

Lights, camera...

There are now a couple of SyFy films and an Xbox One game (*Chariot*) that synchronise with Hue so your lights respond to the action.

WORKS WITH...

Interestingly, HomeKit isn't in the Hue app because Philips has chosen to focus entirely on lighting, so to integrate your bulbs with the rest of your HomeKit devices you'll need another app. Insteon+ doesn't look amazing, but it is free and easy to use.



in association with:

Telkom

Philips Hue starter kits from R2 850 / nubra.co.za

What's the story?

Hue has always been awesome. Intelligent locks, blinds, security cams and the like are all useful, but smart lighting is the sexy bit of the smarthome, and while Hue once stood alone in its own colourful world, recent updates mean it'll now play nice with loads of standards, most notably Apple HomeKit.

To integrate with HomeKit you need the new Bridge 2.0, which is available for R3 150 (import) bundled with three

coloured bulbs or R1050 on its own. Actually importing the blue could be prohibitive for some.

It's certainly worth it for iPhone users, as HomeKit support also brings with it Siri voice control. "Hey Siri, turn my lights blue!" you'll say, and (with a little quip) Siri will. You will feel like a god.

Any good?

Apple HomeKit also includes support for 'Scenes'. Four are

preinstalled for when you get up, leave the house, return home and go to bed. You can add your Hue lights to any of these, or any new Scenes you fancy. Say "Hey Siri, time for bed!" and your lights can all switch off automatically.

If you've also got a HomeKit-compatible thermostat or door lock, these could be set to cool down and lock up with that same voice command. Or you can customise it the other way: program your Hue lights

to automatically turn off or on when a HomeKit-compatible sensor sees you leaving or entering your house, for example.

Essentially, Apple HomeKit adds lots of extra smarthome possibilities, but even on its own Philips Hue remains one of the coolest gadgets you can buy. And if you're not an Apple fan, support for Samsung Smart Things is also built in, and Nest Weave is on the way.

STUFF SAYS Still the sexiest smarthome kit, and it's now Apple-approved ★★★★★

Telkom

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Tanks for nothing

Bigger reservoirs for both water and beans would make top-ups less frequent, which would save a lot of time (and caffeine deprivation rages).

The strong trousers

Was the last cup too weak? You'll need to set it to 3–4 cups and activate the Strong setting if you don't want a tiny mug of wimpy joe.

**WORKS WITH...**

Until IFTTT support is added (which may have happened by the time you read this), the dedicated Smarter 2.0 app is the way to operate coffee-bot.

Twirl the dial for number of cups, tap to change strength and customise the Wake Up and Home modes.



in association with:
Telkom

Smarter Coffee R3800 / firebox.com

What's the story?

Coffee's been far too stupid for far too long, hasn't it? Waiting for you to manually spoon it into a receptacle before being covered in near-boiling water. It needs an injection of intelligence to make getting a caffeine fix less of an effort for sleepy humans.

If the name is anything to go by, that's exactly what the Smarter Coffee machine is offering. True, you still have to fill it with coffee and water,

but you can pour in a whole bag of beans (it will also handle grounds) and a couple of jugs of water in one go, and then go completely hands-free with your coffee making.

Except for binning the used grounds so you don't have a percolator full of soggy mush, of course, and giving it a clean every so often... OK, so this isn't an entirely hands-free experience, but Smarter Coffee does connect to your Wi-Fi and there's a dedicated app

from which you can start a brew with a single tap.

Any good?

Working upstairs or lying in bed? Press the button and (depending on how palatial your abode is) you'll instantly hear beans being ground into tasty oblivion before the water is heated and poured through them. Then, when you're ready (the hot plate gives you a 40-minute window), you can brave the trek to the kitchen

and find a jug of the delicious black stuff waiting for you.

You can create a schedule so it's ready for when you get up, and use location tracking to make sure it's ready when you get home from work. IFTTT support is promised soon.

Notifications for depleted water and beans would be useful so you could top up before bed and prevent a coffee-free morning, but all in all this is indeed a smarter way to get your caffeine fix.

STUFF SAYS Not the smartest of things, but smart by coffee standards ★★★★★



Unleash your
shoreline diva
with these
surf essentials

PREVIOUS PAGE

1 Boardmans Beach Blanket
R470 / boardmans.co.za

2 CAT Watch
R3 000 / catapparel.co.za

3 Ted Baker floral swimming costume
R1100 / stuttafords.co.za

4 Balenciaga sunglasses
R6 000 / sdmeyewear.co.za

5 Loafers
R600 / riverisland.com

6 Diesel sunglasses
R1140 / moscon.co.za

7 David Beckham Classic Blue
R400 / beckham-fragrances.com

8 Nivea Sun Protect SPF50 Spray
R160 / nivea.co.za





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R1100 / stuttafords.co.za

2 Lenthéric Masculin Body Lotion
R25 / lenthéric.co.za

3 Bang & Olufsen Beolit 15 speaker
from R9 200 / bang-olufsen.com

4 Nixon Ultratide
R4 500 / nixon.com

5 Guess Night Access
R450 / shop.guess.com

6 Trenery chino shorts
R600 / woolworths.co.za

7 Matis Paris Sun Protection Milk
R570 / matisrosebank.co.za

8 Country Road bikini top
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1 Hilfiger Denim T-shirt
R600 / stuttafords.co.za

2 Nixon Lowdown II
R1900 / takealot.com

3 L'Oréal Men Expert Anti-Perspirant
R25 / loreal.co.za

4 Rip Curl swimming shorts
R500 / stuttafords.co.za

5 Nivea Men Body Cream
R39 / nivea.co.za

6 Azzaro Pour Homme Intense
R775 / redsquare.co.za

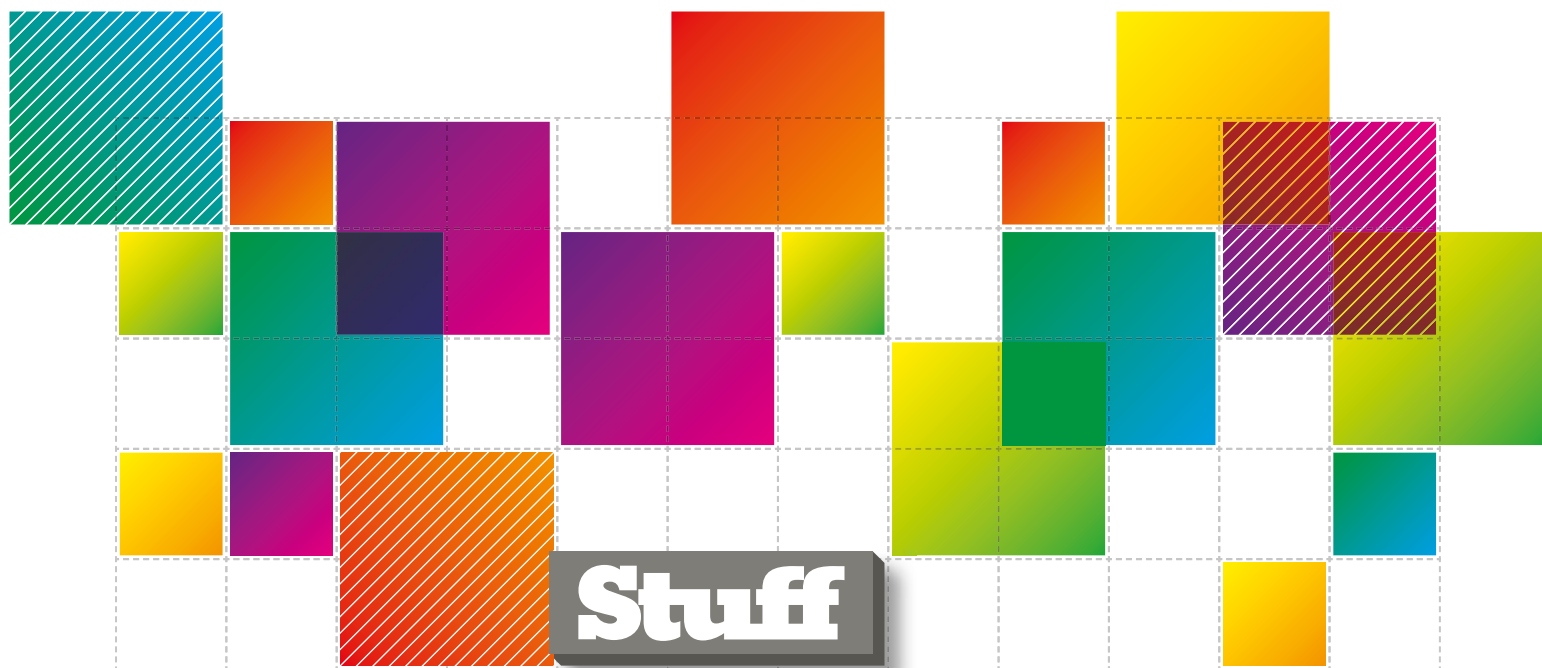
7 Eucerin Sun Protection SPF 50+
R195 / eucerin.co.za

8 Levi's sunglasses
R850 / moscon.co.za

9 Swarovski tortoiseshell sunglasses
R4 300 / sdmeyewear.co.za

10 Katy Perry Mad Potion
R500 / katyperryfrances.com/en-za

11 River Island bikini top
R400 / riverisland.com



PROJECTS

MAKE. DO. UPGRADE.



p94
BETA YOURSELF:
MAKING
iOS APPS
Make that 'Airbnb for gerbils' idea come true at last



p96
PLAYLIST:
ALTERNATIVE
XMAS SONGS
Christmas time, misteloe and whine



p98
SUPER GEEK:
BOARD GAMES
Like video games, but made out of reality... and 'cool again', apparently



p100
GADGET
DOCTOR:
YOUR LETTERS
The answer you are looking for is yes, no, maybe.

BETA
YOURSELF

MAKING iOS APPS

Ready to make that must-download you've been thinking about for three years? Michael Simmons, founder of award-winning app Fantastical 2, will help you get started

THE BASICS

■ **Go analogue.** A pencil, paper and your imagination are the best combination for brainstorming ideas. There are also great tools such as Prott (prottapp.com) or proto.io for prototyping on a computer, but it's hard to beat the simplicity of a blank sheet of paper.

■ **Apples are sweetest.** All you need to get started in iOS development is a Mac. Coding doesn't take up much storage or demand a fast processor, but screen estate can be useful – so if you don't



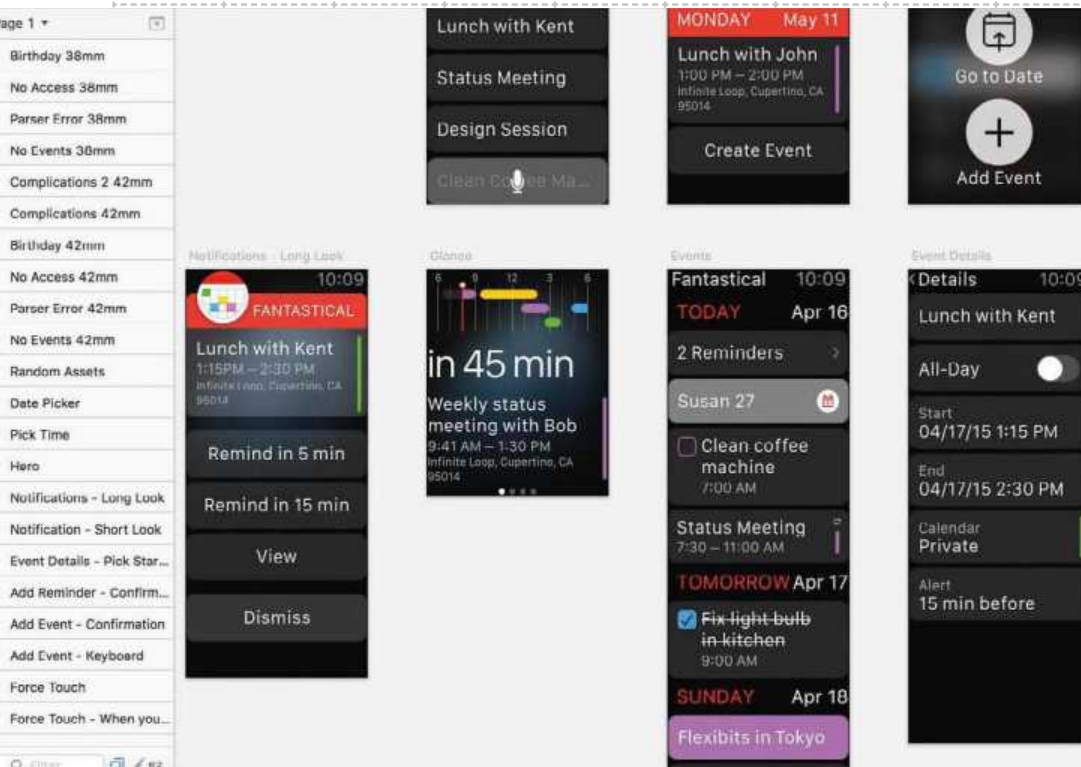
need portability, a Mac Mini or iMac will be fine.

■ **Choose the Xcode factor.** Use Apple's free development suite Xcode over other solutions that promise to let you run your app anywhere, such as Appcelerator or PhoneGap. It may seem more difficult at first, but it makes getting

help easier and will definitely pay off in the long run.

■ **Aim low.** When coming up with an app idea, think about a simple problem and how to solve it. You don't have to create something brand new, but you do have to be making something that interests you. It's the only way to push you through the learning obstacles.

■ **Don't call it Arkansas.** The app's name is very important. Make sure there are no pronunciation ambiguities and that you can easily tell someone its name. You don't want to be spelling it out every time someone asks.



LEARN THE LINGO

■ **Be bilingual.** Apps can be written in two languages: Swift and Objective-C. Swift is newer, but most apps are still written in Objective-C. Learn a bit of both.

■ **Get stuck in.** If you're going the online course route, choose one that encourages you to build apps from the start – udemy.com and lynda.com both have excellent Swift courses.

■ **Nail the basics.** Programming skills apply everywhere. Learn the basic concepts well, as the knowledge will transfer to web design and Android development too.



LEVEL UP WITH...



STACK OVERFLOW

stackoverflow.com

Developers of all types and levels of experience talk over their problems here, so it's a great place to go if you're in need of help. But be warned: it's not always newb-friendly, so make sure you check its library of over ten million programming questions to see if yours has been asked before.

dribbble

DRIBBBLE

dribbble.com

Whether you're looking for logo ideas or just fancy dunking your head in a stream of visual inspiration, this 'show and tell' site for designers should be top of your bookmarks list. There are special deals on design software and you can even filter projects by colour hex codes to see what combinations work for your app's colour scheme.

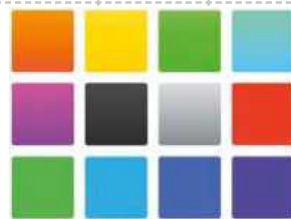


BUILDING BLOCKS

■ **Get structural.** Apps consist of the user interface, the pieces underneath that power the UI and the glue that holds these two together. The proper term for this is the model view controller (MVC).

■ **Say what?** In other words: the model stores the data, the view is what the user sees (the UI) and the controller updates the model based on input (like a new event in a calendar app).

■ **Step back.** Thinking about MVC as you design your app makes you aware of how it will all work together.



LOOK AND FEEL

■ **Learn from the master.** Look at Apple's own apps as a starting point for good design. Learn how it thinks apps should look and work, and apply those principles to your creation.

■ **Be inclusive.** People have different levels of eyesight. Think about providing the ability to adjust font sizes and offering different display themes.

■ **Experiment with colours.** There are no hard and fast rules about how many colours to use, but sites like UI Palette (uipalette.net) are good for finding combinations that work.



ROAD TESTING...

■ **Take a test ride.** Beta testing is essential for finding bugs and ironing out any kinks. Apple's free TestFlight is great for quick testing, but also has some limitations.

■ **Puck it up.** An alternative is HockeyApp (hockeyapp.net), which provides not only beta testing but also crash reporting, user feedback and analytics.

■ **Be a travelling salesman.** Always keep two versions of your app on your iPhone (one that works and one you're working on) so you can show people and get their feedback.



APP: THE HUMAN STORY

appdocumentary.com

It's not out until later this month, but this Kickstarter-funded documentary looks as if it could be the app equivalent of *Indie Game: The Movie*. A host of A-list developers have signed up to be involved and its website has a mix of video shorts and interesting stories written by people who have struck app gold.



PLAYLIST

ALTERNATIVE XMAS SONGS

Local supermarket already polluting your ears with Cliff's drippiest festive ditties? Bah, humbug. Strike back with *Stuff's* selection of mainstream-dodging seasonal gems

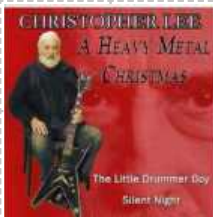
A Gun For Christmas The Vandals

Not content with just this one festive song, the Vandals went and recorded a whole punk rock Christmas album (*Oi To The World*), and it's completely brilliant. Go on, turn up your stereo and have a little mosh around the tree – just be careful not to pogo all over your presents.



Jesus Christ Big Star

This joyous, jangly ode to the big man himself would be at home on any happy-clappy Christian rock album. Instead, it sits incongruously in the middle of Big Star's *Third*, one of the bleakest records ever made. One suspects that the sentiments behind it might not be entirely sincere.



Silent Night Christopher Lee

This is possibly the loudest version of *Silent Night* you've ever heard, full of shredding guitars and topped with a wizard baritone. Legendary thespian Lee, who sadly died in June, came late to the metal scene – at 91 he became the oldest ever artist to make the Billboard singles chart with *Jingle Hell*.



Post Apocalypse Christmas Gruff Rhys

Imagine the horrors of *Fallout 3* set against a jaunty tune by him out of Super Furry Animals and you have this. "Deep inside the concrete bunker, post apocalypse bunker / We lick our wounds to kill the hunger, post apocalypse Christmas." More mulled wine, anyone?



I'll Be Killing You (This Christmas) Loudon Wainwright III

An anti-NRA protest song might not sound too twinkly, but this one's melody is irresistible. Inspired by a shooting in 2012, its mix of dark humour ("Santa's packing heat this Christmas") and sleigh bells mean it hits home without upsetting everyone.



Like Herod Mogwai

Admittedly the Yuletide elements of *Like Herod* begin and end with the title, but the poor chap always gets overlooked in carols. You'd think going around killing babies was somehow anti-festive. But he gets a look-in here courtesy of this classic 'quiet, quiet, quiet, OH SO LOUD' Mogwai track.

Christmas Was Better In The 80s The Futureheads

Just before the Futureheads went full 'a capella' and slid into obscurity, they donned their skinny ties and knocked out this blast of nostalgic post-punk – sure to spark an argument with your uncle about whether their cover of *Hounds Of Love* is better than the original.





SLADE SLAYERS HOW TO WRITE A CHRISTMAS SONG



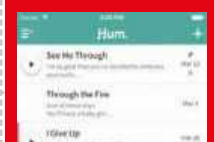
1 THE LYRICS

Everyone knows the classic Christmas song building blocks: mistletoe, chestnuts, zombie reindeer. But how to mould these overfamiliar staples into original lines? The Song Lyrics Generator will do the heavy lifting for you. songlyricsgenerator.com



2 THE SOUND

Once you have the trunk of your melodic tree in place, it's time to add sonic baubles. Freesound has hundreds of royalty-free sound effects, from sleigh bells to 'Santa falling down a chimney'. Add them to your loop library in Garageband. freesound.org



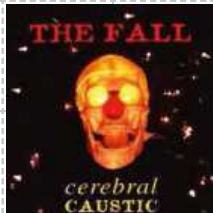
3 THE SONGBOOK

No more do your epic poetry and melodic gems need to be captured in separate apps. Hum lets you add notes and lyrics to your audio recordings, and filter your creations by key and tuning. **R28 / IOS**



Christmas In Hollis Run-DMC

When Run-DMC were asked to record a Christmas track for a Special Olympics benefit album in 1987, they initially refused, thinking it would wreck their street cred in one corny swoop. Instead, a sample of Clarence Carter's funky *Back Door Santa* provided us with an unusual seasonal classic.



Hark The Herald Angels Sing The Fall

Mark E Smith may be indie's answer to Ebenezer Scrooge, but when it comes to Christmas he's a big softie. The Fall have recorded several festive songs over the past 40 years, including a ragged take on *Jingle Bell Rock* and this, a merry gem with falsetto backing vocals.



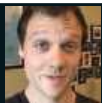
Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence Ryuichi Sakamoto

Don't bother listening to any of the loungey stuff he's done since, but Sakamoto's original theme for this deeply cheerless 1983 film has a haunting charm. The film stars David Bowie as a POW who's a bit of a rebel rebel, and Sakamoto himself as a camp commandant with issues.



Everything's Gonna Be Cool This Christmas Eels

Not all alternative Christmas songs are dark-hearted or wrapped in knowing irony. Mark 'E' Everett proves there's still a place for power-chord optimism with this fine bit of tinsel. Most importantly, it includes the lyric "Baby Jesus, born to rock".

SUPER
GEEK

BOARD GAMES

Board game addict Quintin Smith explains why the ancient art of table play isn't just coming back, it's blowing up – so now's the perfect time to get involved

Something amazing is happening. After decades of video games being 'the future', game designers the world over are coming back to the dining room table. Board games, card games and pen-and-paper roleplaying games aren't just cool again. Today's games are so good they make their 1980s ancestors look like junk.

There are a lots of reasons why. In an increasingly digital culture, the tactility of board games (like vinyl records) becomes a lot more attractive. The internet's also been vital,

letting people discover, buy and crowdfund niche games where previously their existence would never have been widely known. Most importantly, the games are just beautiful. In the late '90s, meticulously designed German games such as *Settlers Of Catan* reached a wider audience, and ever since then they've got better and better.

The only question is, what do you want to play? *The Resistance* (R350, takealot.com) is a simple card game that casts you and your friends as members of an underground resistance unit,

where some players are government spies trying to get sent on missions to secretly sabotage them from within. You know someone on the team is a spy...but who?

If you're after something more traditional, *Ticket To Ride* (R760, takealot.com) is an even simpler game based on developing a lovely train network, though it can quickly end up feeling like a *Bourne Identity* fistfight in an enclosed space. Any route you claim will prompt other players to scream in protest and swear revenge.

The best thing about the recent board game explosion is that there's now something for everyone, as you can see with the three modern classics below. It's not just that board games are really good fun either. Video games are fantastic, but if anything, our becoming so obsessed with them over the past 30 years has highlighted everything they can't yet do. The improved social dynamics and design space in using physical objects makes playing these games vital and exciting. We can, and should, have both.

JARGON BUSTER

■ EUROGAME

A style of conflict-averse game that originated in Germany, a eurogame is one that sees players competing without ever coming into contact.

■ AMERITRASH

Silly and thematically ambitious games of a style that was popular in 1980s America. If you're playing a space marine or a wizard or you're battling Cthulhu, it's Ameritrash.

■ ANALYSIS PARALYSIS

Crippling indecision that strikes players when playing complex board games. Not to be confused with tactical thinking, analysis paralysis often involves a frustrating absence of any thoughts whatsoever.

■ QUARTERBACKING

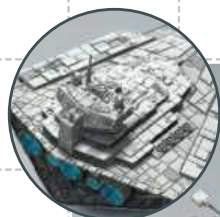
Much-maligned behaviour where a player will suggest what another should do on their turn, to the point of almost playing the game for them.



LORDS OF VEGAS

Cutthroat and hilarious, *Lords Of Vegas* is a game about making millions as a casino mogul in Las Vegas. Players invest money to turn their barren lots into glittering casinos, which pay out in awkward fits and starts. The thing is, unlike Monopoly's dull arc, which always feels like you're being slowly beaten to death by integers, *Lords Of Vegas* allows players to acquire other lots, merge casinos and then try to wrest control of the supercasino from others in unfathomably expensive gambles. Also, if you're ever bored (or shy of a couple of million bucks) you can play craps at your friends' tables.

R750 / boardgames.co.za

THE
MONOPOLY
CRUSHER

STAR WARS: ARMADA

Would you like to steer a gorgeous, pre-painted Star Destroyer around your table, scattering your friends' X-Wing squadrons with a barrage of turbolasers? Of course you would, and *Star Wars: Armada* is only too keen to help. This is a collectible miniatures game from the best publisher in the business, and in addition to being intensely desirable, it's a tense war game. The gigantic capital ships under your control draw slow curves across the board, while smaller ships cut a path between them and tiny, fragile fighters flit about like mayflies. Perfect for a lazy Sunday.

R1500 / awx.co.za

THE
LUXURY
MODEL



THE
SEASONAL
CLASSIC



DEAD OF WINTER

Part of a popular genre of 'betrayal' board games, *Dead Of Winter* casts everybody as a group of survivors during a frozen zombie apocalypse, and only by working together and managing careful reserves of medicine, food and weaponry will you manage to survive. But there's a problem. Everyone has a secret objective too, and there's the very real possibility that one player's secret will be the failure of the colony. You can cast players into exile on a successful vote... but you'd better hope you're right, or you'll never make it through the long winter alive.

R975 / digitalsushi.co.za

GET INSPIRED!



THE WEBSITE BOARDGAMEGEEK

With 65,000 games and counting, BoardGameGeek is a comprehensive database of every title ever made. Its ageing design can be tricky to navigate, but do persevere. The forums contain the answer to every question you will ever ask, and the 'Hotness' sidebar is worth keeping an eye on. boardgamegeek.com



THE SHOW GENCON

America's largest and best board game convention can be found in Indianapolis every August, and it's absolutely worth the pilgrimage. It's a friendly convention in one of the most hospitable cities in America. Wander the halls, play anything you like, and come home with as many games as you can stagger under. gencon.com



THE PODCAST SHUT UP AND SIT DOWN

This funny and heart-felt resource for anybody who loves to play has regular reviews, videos and an excellent monthly podcast (starring Quintin Smith and friends). Founded four years ago to teach people about board games, the site now focuses on keeping the hobby accessible and welcoming to newcomers. shutupandsitdown.com

GADGET DOCTOR



ALWAYS ON CALL

facebook.com/stuffsa @StuffSA
stuff@stuff.co.za

MAIL OF THE MONTH

Q RAM-ING IT HOME

They say being 'spoilt for choice' is always a good thing, but not in this case where Stuff, as my go-to-guide, keeps changing my mind when deciding what new phone to get! I was excited about the Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge+ because of its 4GB RAM, but the price put me off, so I thought I would settle for the LG G4...and lo and behold *Stuff* comes with the OnePlus 2 in the October issue. As you can deduce, it's the RAM I'm after...so please can you ease my

pain and tell me which is the best all-rounder between these two.
Brendan

A If it's RAM you want, you'd be better off waiting. Samsung's got 6GB smartphone configurations on the way in the new year. Probably in their new flagships. That said, if you can snag a OnePlus 2 then absolutely do it. They're only hard to really recommend in SA because they're difficult to get. But if you can get one...



it makes more sense to stick with another Canon DSLR. Not only will she feel right at home, but it will save a lot of money – good lenses aren't cheap. The Canon EOS 70D (R12 000, body only) is a fine camera and we recommend it. It has 19 cross-type autofocus points, and its ability to take seven 20MP shots per second (at up to 1/8000 speed) should produce crisp, clear photos of balls, bats, racquets and anything else the sports world throws her way.

BlackBerrys since before they were even trendy – I bemoan the lack of apps but that's all. I would like to change to iOS or Android, but I need a versatile word substitution ability. I need it because I do a lot of repetitive quotes and bids and offers: I have 75 different 'macro' texts that I use regularly. Can you suggest a smartphone or an app with this feature?

Michael

A BlackBerrys were trendy? No problem, Michael. Both Android devices and iPhones have this feature built in, so there's no need to mess around with installing separate apps, which is a big plus. We'd recommend an iPhone for the most hassle-free implementation, though, as Android's shortcut settings have a character limit and are generally more picky. Once you've unwrapped your shiny new iPhone, just hit up the keyboard settings and tap Shortcuts, and you'll be good to go.

Speak your brains to *Stuff* and you could win!
This letter wins a Thule Atmos X5 iPhone 6 cover to the value of R1499

Q BEING A GOOD SPORT

Hi *Stuff*. My mom wants to get a new camera to replace her Canon 450D. She does lots of sports photography so she needs something fast and snappy, but she can't choose between a CSC or an SLR – any

suggestions? She's got a bunch of Canon lenses already, if that helps, and anything less than R15 000 would be great if at all possible!

Ken

A Hi Ken. If yo momma already has the lenses then

Q BLACKBERRIES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT

I seem to be the last person on earth using a BlackBerry! I have the Q10 and rather like it. I've had

Congratulations to our Click7 winners: Aida Musper, Ian Franks, Yvette Bezuidenhout, Wendy Black, Miles Kidson, Carl Bowerman, Anton Walkinshaw, Sean Darch **and our Braven winners:** Gregory Venter, K Botha, Werner Erasmus, Ross Macdonald, Denham Wiercx, Rene Brown, Dylan Launspach, Andrea Goodford, Joshua Taylor and Jacques Enslin

WIN



Next month's best letter wins a Thule Legend GoPro® Sling Pack to the value of R1 499.

This sleek, lightweight sling allows you to stay active with up to two GoPro® cameras and accessories within reach.

*GoPro® cameras and accessories not included.





Stuff

TOP TEN

OF EVERYTHING

Smartphones	102
Phablets	103
Laptops	104
Tablets	105
Wearables	106
TVs	107
Compact cameras	108
DSLRs, etc	109
Games	110
Headphones	111



Have your say on the Stuff Facebook page tinyurl.com/StuffZA



For reviews of products featured in the top 10s, visit stuff.co.za

Prices quoted are the best available at the time of printing

HOT
BUY

1



Samsung Galaxy S6

This is a new era for Samsung, with a smart upgrade that fixes not just things that were amiss in the Galaxy S5, but things that have plagued them for years. No plastic here: its front and back are super-tough Gorilla Glass 4, its sides aluminium. In terms of ergonomics and speaker quality, HTC still wins, but only just. And in the more important areas of camera performance, screen tech and raw power, the Galaxy S6 tramples its rival. We just wish it had a microSD slot.

STUFF SAYS

Samsung has proven its critics wrong – the Galaxy S6 is the new benchmark for flagship phones

from R15 000 ★★★★★

UPDATE

2



Apple iPhone 6s

"Everything's changed" is pushing it, but within the 6s's familiar body lies a surprising amount of innovation. You'll really notice the A9 processor's added speed, the 12MP camera's scope and quality, and of course, the time-saving delight that is 3D Touch.

R11 800

★★★★★

NEW

3



Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge

When it launched earlier this year the Galaxy S6 Edge was one of the best smartphones we'd ever used, not least because Samsung stopped making all the bits plastic. It still is one of the best phones we've encountered, with the added benefit of a price drop.

R12 000

★★★★★

**BEST FOR
POWERING ALL
THE THINGS**

4



LG G4

The leather-clad LG G4 is a treat for those who want something that looks and feels a bit different. Its camera is incredibly powerful, giving you almost as much control as a DSLR, and the large screen is brilliant... but the battery life holds it back from the top.

R9 000

★★★★★

5



Apple iPhone 6

With its slim, deeply attractive build and software overhaul, the iPhone 6 is the freshest-feeling iPhone in years. Its larger screen is big enough to be a useful improvement, with gorgeous colours, and this is Apple's best ever battery.

from
R9 900

★★★★★

6



LG G3

LG surprises us again. There's barely a single thing wrong with the G3... and so, so much that's right. Upgrades range from sleeker back buttons to the bigger, better 2K screen and laser-assisted camera. And it still lasts 15 hours. How do they do it?

R9 000

★★★★★

NEW

7



Sony Xperia Z5

Do a higher-megapixel camera and neat fingerprint scanner revitalise this Sony? Nearly but not quite. This is a very good and attractive phone, but we expect a hefty price tag which could make it a tough sell over the flagships from the Android kings.

Rtba

★★★★☆

8



Xiaomi Mi4

Newcomer Xiaomi is toting some impressive tech. As a value proposition they're top of the class but will they convince the SA consumer that they have what it takes to dethrone Samsung, LG and Apple? The Mi4 goes a long way to proving they can.

R4 000

★★★★★

9



Huawei P8

Huawei's newest flagship has some serious skills when it comes to its camera. It likes to play games with light but it's sadly lacking the bit of extra polish we'd expect before it can be moved higher up on the list of awesome. Get 'em next time.

from
R7 400

★★★★★

10



Sony Xperia M4 Aqua

A mid-range smartphone that posts results that make flagship devices look nervously at their bottom line, the M4 Aqua's Xperia pedigree also makes certain that you can dunk, drown and otherwise swim with Sony's octa-core bargain handset. Wow.

from
R4 000











★★★★☆

● Prices quoted are for handset only unless otherwise stated

The new and easy way to de-clutter yourself
from **ALL** your mobile device's cables, **ALL CABLES**,
ALL GONE, with the **ALLDOCK** range.





HOT BUY 1		Samsung Galaxy Note 4 Yes, the Galaxy Note 5 has been announced and we've heard good things. But we haven't had a chance to carress its keys yet so the Galaxy Note 4, with its excellent 5.7-in/14.5cm Super AMOLED screen, powerful Exynos 5433 or Snapdragon 805 chip, 32GB of storage, 16MP camera and up to 128GB of microSD-added space is still the phablet champion.	STUFF SAYS The phablet to choose when you want everything under one umbrella, from power to smarts to photo chops. from R9 000 ★★★★★
2		Apple iPhone 6s Plus The iPhone 6s Plus provides an expansive, immersive experience thanks to its giant screen. But many will find it too cumbersome, which defeats the purpose of those brilliant OIS and Live Photos camera features, and the 6s is clearly the faster phone.	from R13 600 ★★★★★
NEW 3		Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge+ The Edge+ is a larger version of the curvy S6 Edge that wowed us earlier this year; its extra chunk of screen and camera are terrific, while it's also technologically superior to almost everything out there. For a money-no-object phone, it's an absolute blessing.	from R15 000 ★★★★★ BEST FOR CUTTING-EDGE GADGETEERS
4		Huawei Mate 7 Huawei's 6in/15.2cm Mate 7 doesn't really fit the bill of supreme cutting-edge but it has price and surprising performance, considering the 1.2GHz octa-core Snapdragon CPU, as well as the 13MP/5MP camera setup in its favour. Plus that massive battery. Nice.	R8 000 ★★★★★ BEST FOR THE BUDGET-CONSCIOUS
5		LG G4 Can a phone be in two places at one? Yes, it can. The LG G4, while LG's main flagship handset for 2015, is also a great phablet in its own right. With LG's stellar camera tech, that oversized 5.5in/14cm screen make this a tiny phablet but it makes the grade.	R9 000 ★★★★★
6		Nokia Lumia 1520 It's getting a little long in the tooth but the Lumia 1520 is still a great phablet. 6in/15.2cm display, a 20MP PureView camera and enough processing power to still stand proud among the newcomers are yours to command.	R8 000 ★★★★★
7		Samsung Galaxy Note Edge We're probably never going to see the like of the 2.7GHz, 3GB RAM, 32GB storage Galaxy Note Edge ever again. Not because it's a bad phablet with its 5.6in/14.2cm QHD edged display but because it's about to be supplanted by the Galaxy S6 Edge+.	from R11 200 ★★★★★
8		Google Nexus 6 A 5.9in/15cm QHD display, Android Lollipop, a Snapdragon 805, 3GB of system memory and 32GB of storage from Google? That's a phablet to be proud of. The only problem with these slick slices of hardware is that they're hard to find in South Africa.	R6 750 ★★★★★
9		Xiaomi Note Pro Xiaomi's Note Pro is the best device we've seen from the Chinese newcomer, with 5.7in/14.5cm of QHD screen, the flagship-chasing Snapdragon 810, a massive 4GB of RAM and 64GB of storage at your fingertips. It can get better but not a whole lot.	Rtb ★★★★★
10		Huawei G7 If you're in search of a budget phablet then Huawei's G7 has you covered. Mid-range specs, including 2GB of RAM and 16GB of storage, and a 5.5in/14cm 720p display will give you the phablet experience at a fraction of the cost.	R4 700 ★★★★★☆



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HOT
BUY

1



Apple MacBook Pro 13in (2015)

Apple hasn't changed too many parts of the MacBook Pro for 2015. There's a fancy new trackpad and the latest generation of Intel CPUs, which deliver better stamina as well as a chunk more power. This is an incremental upgrade, but given how good the Pro already was, that's more than enough to keep it right at the top of the laptop honours list. If you need power as well as stamina and portability, this is one of the best laptops money can buy.

STUFF SAYS

If it ain't broke... it hasn't radically changed, but the Pro's performance and trackpad are top of its class

from R22 000 ★★★★★

2



Asus ZenBook UX305

Asus knows what it's doing. It knows that the Apple MacBook Air laptops are treading water and the ZenBook UX305 is pretty much everything the 2015 Air should have been, with its fetching aluminium design and as good a display as any laptop.

from
R12 000

★★★★★

3



Microsoft Surface Pro 3

The fact that it's one of only two devices to feature in two of our Top Tens is a testament to the Surface Pro's versatility: it's a strong tablet, but its full-fat operating system and powerful innards mean it's also a worthy adversary to Ultrabooks and MacBooks.

from
R17 100

★★★★★

**BEST FOR
WORKING
ANYWHERE**

4



Lenovo X1 Carbon

This is it, the best Windows machine we've had occasion to caress in a long, long time. The Quad HD does little to lessen our esteem. So why so low down the list? Gimmicky voice and gesture control, for one, and that multi-function strip could use a little work.

R33 000

★★★★★

**BEST FOR
SOOTHING
YOUR EYEBALLS**

5



Apple MacBook (2015)

This is no 'Air', nor 'Pro': a clear sign that this is what Apple sees as the future of the ultraportable laptop. And it's certainly very desirable: a 12in lean machine with a superb screen and haptic touchpad. However, the lack of ports can be frustrating.

from
R22 000

★★★★★

6



MSI GT80 2QE Titan

We didn't nickname the Titan the Beast for nothing. MSI's monster fits the bill in every sense of the word. Power, specs, size and power draw, as well as noise. But it'll play anything and everything you toss into its gaping maw without blinking.

from
R50 000

★★★★★

**BEST FOR
SHOWING OFF
IN PUBLIC**

7



Aorus X7 Pro

Dual GTX970M GPUs, a Core i7 4870HQ brainbox, 16GB of RAM as standard and an HD 17.3in/44cm display in one of the lightest packages you'll see make the X7 Pro the most portable desktop replacement we've ever seen. Also: All the gaming power.

from
R34 000

★★★★★

8



Apple MacBook Air 13in (2015)

Apple is scraping by with pretty much the same Air design as before. You get a new processor, new connectors and slightly improved battery life, but still no Retina screen. However, if a portable road warrior is what you're after, this is still a great choice.

from
R17 000

★★★★☆

9



MSI GT72 2QE Dominator Pro

Big, loud and powerful, this is the SUV of gaming laptops. Even the price, which is up against the R50k mark, marks this as a serious piece of kit. The 17.3-in/44cm HD LED display, GTX 980M, 16GB RAM and the Core i7 4710 HQ silicon heart are a big clue.

R42 000

★★★★★

**BEST FOR
FRAGGING
NOOBS**

10



Lenovo Yoga Pro 3

The third entry in the Yoga Pro line refines the laptop/tablet hybrid design with a power-sipping new Intel Core M processor plus slimness and style to make even the MacBook Air look worried. And you can stand it up like a tent. If you want.

from
R24 000











★★★★☆

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HOT BUY	1		Apple iPad Air 2 The iPad Air didn't really need to be thinner, but that doesn't mean 6.1mm isn't mighty impressive. This combines with reassuring weight and impeccable build quality to make this the most desirable tab on the planet. While the display is the same Retina resolution as before, clever screen tech brings the pixels closer to the surface, and the whole experience is even faster than before thanks to the new A8X chip. Basically it's the best tablet in the world made even better.	STUFF SAYS Thinner, lighter and mightier: Apple's iron-fisted reign at the top of the tablet charts continues unabated from R8 500 ★★★★★
NEW	2		Apple iPad Mini 4 This is the mini tab we've been waiting for. It's 1.4mm thinner and 32g lighter, just the right size for a great portable entertainment hub, and subtle display tweaks will do justice to games and graphic novels alike. Plus it will easily last three days on a charge.	from R7 000 ★★★★★ BEST FOR CREATIVITY ON THE MOVE
NEW	3		Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 9.7 Slimmer and faster, with a brilliant screen and serious stamina, the Galaxy Tab S2 sees Samsung back in the running for the Android throne. The Xperia Z4 just pips it with its bundled keyboard, but the S2's a versatile, big-screen tab first and foremost.	R9 200 ★★★★★ BEST FOR MAGAZINES AND MOVIES
	4		Samsung Galaxy Tab S10.5 Samsung has blessed the Galaxy Tab with one of the best tablet screens we've ever laid eyes on, plus an impressive camera and some incredible stamina – but there are performance niggles and Apple's tablet app selection is still far superior.	R10 500 ★★★★★ BEST FOR MAGAZINES AND MOVIES
	5		Samsung Galaxy Tab S 8.4 Superb screen, unique features... really, there's very little that's missing here. For us the iPad Mini beats the Samsung by a whisker for its design, performance and wider selection of optimised apps, but against other Android tabs it's a winner.	R9 200 ★★★★★
	6		Google Nexus 9 The design isn't as pristine, but this is a real Android contender to rival the iPads. You get the new Android 5.0 Lollipop software, bags of power and a super-sharp display. With 12 hours of video play and two front-facing speakers, it'll be a great film buddy.	R6 100 ★★★★★
	7		Microsoft Surface Pro 3 At last, Microsoft has delivered on the promise of the tablet-cum-laptop hybrid. It proves there's space in the world for a design that's more productive than an iPad or Galaxy Note, but easier to hump around than a traditional laptop.	from R18 500 ★★★★★ BEST FOR USING ANYWHERE
	8		Asus Transformer Book T100 Chi While it may sit in the middle of 10in/25.5cm hybrid range on price, the Transformer Book T100 Chi is classier than the average tablet. Improvements to design, screen and keyboard quality make it a neat choice if you don't mind working with a small screen.	Rtba ★★★★★☆
	9		Samsung Galaxy Note 10.1 (2014) The new 10.1 is fit to bursting with clever tricks, comes with the note-tastic S Pen and has a stunning 2560x1600 screen. But while we can forgive it its tacky looks, minor performance glitches deny it that fifth star; we hope firmware updates will fix them.	R7 400 ★★★★★☆
	10		Mecer A801 Odd choice for a number 10, wouldn't you say? But the Mecer A801 has proved extremely popular here at home, with a price that can't be beaten, 3G data capability and enough specs to keep Windows 8.1 running along nicely. Also: R2 000!	from R2 000 ★★★★★☆

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HOT
BUY

1

**Jawbone UP3**

Would you believe, a firmware update? And a few other chance happenings, to be completely honest, which have come together to put the UP3 on top. New firmware gives the UP3 better sleep tracking, passive heart monitoring and a couple of other missing features, and the Smart Coach is still our very best friend. Oh, and that Runtastic partnership? Awesome!

STUFF SAYS

You might leave home without it but you will quickly wish you hadn't.

R2 400 ★★★★★

2

**Apple Watch**

The Apple Watch is one of the best all-round wearables on the market, but if you're primarily after fitness-tracking functionality you can save a small fortune buying a Fitbit or Jawbone instead.

from
R9 000

★★★★★

3

**Pebble Steel**

The Steel keeps the straightforward looks, crisp display and five-day battery life that helped the standard Pebble win our hearts. But it holds more memory, apps and customisable faces, and swaps the plastic for a stylish metal suit.

R2 850

★★★★★

**BEST FOR
BATTERY LIFE**

4

**Garmin Fenix 3**

This is a serious sports watch. It's especially geared for triathlon, with a dedicated race mode, but it's also a great training tool for each discipline and other sports besides. It doesn't do heart monitoring, but a 10-day battery life is your compensation.

R8 500

★★★★☆

5

**Motorola Moto 360**

With its circular design, this is a smartwatch that's actually a smart watch. The Moto 360's our favourite and most comfortable Android Wear watch so far, but its battery life might make you anxious and it's a few specs short of brilliance.

from
R3 500

★★★★☆

6

**Fitbit Charge HR**

The Charge HR includes the pedometer, altimeter and silent alarms of its predecessors but adds an excellent heart-rate monitor while still lasting five days between charges.

R2 300

★★★★★

**BEST FOR
TRACKING
YOUR LIFE**

7

**Jawbone UP24**

Now with Bluetooth for hassle-free syncing, the stylish UP24 is worth the extra cash over the Jawbone Up. The app introduces new challenges and tracks your sleep patterns. It will also gently nudge you, if you're lazing around, to get back on the move.

R1 900

★★★★★

8

**Samsung Gear Live**

Could it be fourth time lucky for Android Wear? A waterproof 1.63in/4.14cm Super AMOLED screen, a resting heart monitor and a growing selection of apps say yes. Overall, the Samsung just pips the LG G Watch. Its pitiful one-day battery life lets it down, though.

R3 000

★★★★☆

9

**LG G Watch R**

This circular smartwatch won't win any beauty contests, but that's about its only flaw. The G Watch R's plastic OLED screen has deep blacks, sharp text and good visibility. Its battery easily lasts a day and a half, and using it is a smooth experience.

R3 550

★★★★☆

10

**Garmin Forerunner 620**

Garmin's wealth of experience in wrist-mounted GPS shines through, offering up a cacophony of stats, including vertical oscillation (how much you jiggle while running) thanks to the smart heart-rate belt. Could be cheaper and more user-friendly, though.

from
R6 350

★★★★☆



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HOT
BUY

1

**LG 65UF850T**

Let's cause some whiplash with LG's extremely stylish 65UF850T 4K TV, an immense screen that still manages to be fairly cheap, all things considered. Value for money is a thing, and you're getting a lot of that here — webOS, 4K res, Harmon Kardon sound and connectivity up the wazoo.

STUFF SAYS

Come for the picture, stay for the webOS ease of use and mind-reading

R35 000 ★★★★★

2

**Samsung 55HU7200**

Want your curved 4K TV screen without having to strike a new gold mine in the Drakensburg? Samsung's 55HU7200 strikes a balance between size and price, with 55in/140cm of UHD screen coming in at under R30 000.

R25 000
★★★★★

3

**Samsung 55HU7000**

Drop the curves and leave the screen and what do you get? A cheaper TV, obviously but the 55HU7000 isn't much of a step down, especially if you're a gamer. Only drawback? 4K content is still sparse but at least you'll be prepared for it when it lands.

R22 000
★★★★★

4

**LG 55UC970T**

Sammy can't hog all the glory and LG's 4K offerings have also quickly become a lot more accessible. Here's 55-in/140cm of curvey LG goodness, with the company's WebOS packed in for good measure, at just a little over Samsung's headliner.

R26 000
★★★★★

5

**Samsung 65LS9000**

Double the cost of our number one, that's the reason for the 65LS9000's appearance down here. But... if you're going to spend on a 4K screen, you want to spend it here — the screen is glorious.

R70 000
★★★★★

6

**LG 60LB652T**

Price drops for 4K means that HD screens are cheaper than ever. So much cheaper, in fact, that you can pick up 60in/152cm for the sort of price that you used to secure a solid forty for. LG's 60LB652T is a great example, with all the HDMI and USB you can eat.

R20 000
★★★★★

7

**Hisense 55K390PAD**

Honestly, how many places will you find a 55in/139cm screen for around the R11k mark? Hisense is one such locations, with the Android-powered K390 being a front-runner for your attention. And money.

R10 500
★★★★★

8

**Samsung 48J6300**

The look of a curved 4K at the price of a traditional flat-screen, Samsung's 48in/122cm J6300 has enough smart TV functions to keep the technophile in you happy for ages. The screen's great too.

R11 500
★★★★★

9

**LG 47LB652T**

There was once a time when a 47-inch TV was out of reach for most South African homes. That time seems to have passed, with LG's 47LB652T falling under the R10k mark. For that you get 3D, HD, as well as smart TV functions from LG's webOS.

R9 000
★★★★

10

**Samsung UA48H6400AK**

This is larger, why is it lower on the list? We're pretty sure it's the price. Otherwise, though, it's a decent crack at a smart TV from Samsung while being easy enough on the pocket that you might consider adopting one for major sporting events. Also: 3D.

R12 500
★★★★

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HOT
BUY

1

**Sony DSC-HX60**

Last year's HX50 was our previous pick for the best compact camera around, and 2014's HX60 isn't a huge departure from its predecessor in terms of build quality, ease of use, specifications and performance — all of which are excellent. And thankfully the superb 30x zoom lens remains. What it does add is NFC (for quick pairing with a tablet or phone) and a newer Bionz X processor, making it a slightly nippier performer.

STUFF SAYS

Sturdy, simple to use and offering a huge zoom range for its size, this is a hugely capable all-rounder

R5 500 ★★★★★

2

**Sony DSC-RX100 III**

If you're looking for the best tiny snapper around, this is it. Excellent image quality, fast autofocus, a useful electronic viewfinder and professional video recording, all squeezed into a truly teeny package that'll fit into your jeans pocket. We're smitten.

R12 000

★★★★★

3

**Fujifilm X20**

The X20 isn't all retro looks and no trousers. It excels in Advanced Auto mode and has manual controls and RAW shooting for creative days. The optical viewfinder, though small, is linked to the 4x zoom and frames well. All this, *and* it looks cool.

R6 400

★★★★★

4

**Panasonic Lumix DMC-FZ200**

If you want a superzoom cam, the Lumix FZ200 wipes the floor with its rival snoopers. A small and solid build is coupled with a 24x optical zoom, an excellent auto mode and spot-on exposure abilities. The downside is the video, which is a mixed bag.

R7 000

★★★★★

**BEST FOR
AT-A-DISTANCE
SHOOTING**

5

**Fujifilm FinePix X100S**

Fujifilm's souped up its fixed-lens retro shooter, with faster focusing and a big APS-C sensor. It's not all new, though, keeping the 35mm-equivalent f/2 lens and hybrid viewfinder from the X100. A less retro version with black finish is now available too.

R12 500

★★★★★

**BEST FOR
DSLR PICS IN
A SMALL BODY**

6

**Canon PowerShot G16**

The G16 packs a lot into its sturdy body: optical viewfinder, loads of manual controls and an f1.8–2.8, 28–140mm (equivalent) zoom lens. Upgrades over the G15 include Wi-Fi and faster burst shooting of up to 12fps, while image quality is as good as ever.

from

R4 800

★★★★★

7

**Nikon Coolpix AW120**

The ultimate rugged camera: almost indestructible, and fit for temperatures as low as -10°C, it will even survive a rinse cycle in your dishwasher. The AW120 also takes lovely pictures and impressive video in both good lighting and dimmer conditions.

R6 500

★★★★★

**BEST FOR
EXTREME
EXPLOITS**

8

**Canon PowerShot G1 X MkII**

This powerful snapper is back, with a tilting touchscreen and a wider wide-angle lens but no viewfinder. The zoom and video are still fairly underwhelming but in terms of sheer image quality there aren't many non-system cameras around that can beat it.

R9 800

★★★★★

9

**Canon PowerShot S120**

Replacing the S110, the S120 is a compact camera for DSLR users on their days off. Its 12.1MP stills, low-light prowess and useful long-exposure modes are welcome, while its slightly laggy lens-ring control and hit-and-miss Wi-Fi features take the shine off.

R4700

★★★★☆

10

**Nikon Coolpix S6700**











Your phone can probably match it for wide-angle photos in good conditions, but if you want to go equipped with a bit more creative control without loading yourself down with kit, the S6700 will be a useful addition to your gadget arsenal.

Rtba

★★★★☆

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HOT BUY 1		Olympus OM-D E-M1 Olympus' new flagship is armed with the same excellent 16.3MP sensor as its predecessor the E-M5, but now has an improved autofocus system, a startlingly good electronic viewfinder and masses of direct controls. And look out for the E-M10: pretty much an E-M5 minus the weatherproofing and with only 3-axis stabilisation, but with an improved EVF, better metering, enhanced Wi-Fi and built-in flash in a smaller, cheaper body.	STUFF SAYS Take the E-M5's amazing speed and quality, then add pro controls and you get the best system cam so far R32 000 ★★★★★ (w/12-40mm lens)
2		Canon EOS 700D Look, it's a new Canon at No2. No, wait, it's the old one. Actually, it's kind of both. The 700D is a minor upgrade over the 650D, keeping its 18MP sensor, flip-out touchscreen and autofocus during video and adding little beyond a new kit lens. Still great, though.	R7 900 (body only) ★★★★★ BEST FOR ALL-ROUND VALUE
3		Sony A6000 Sony's new system camera may be tiny but it packs a big photographic punch. There may be no optical image stabilisation but the incredible speed and accuracy of the A6000's autofocus is a real highlight, as is its large, clear electronic viewfinder.	R10 000 (w/16-50mm lens) ★★★★★
4		Canon EOS 750D The 750D redefines what an entry-level DSLR can be: it's remarkably easy to use, will help you take stunningly good photos whatever your experience level and won't ever let you down.	R7 400 (body only) ★★★★★
5		Nikon D810 The top-end Nikon D810 is a monster camera. Its image quality and performance are hard to fault – if you're a serious photographer willing to stump up the cash then it's a fantastic buy. However, there are some features missing, such as 4K video and Wi-Fi.	R53 000 (body only) ★★★★★
6		Sony A7R We love this camera. It's light weight but tough and delivers results that outstrip pretty much any other compact system camera on the market. It has a huge full-frame 36.4MP sensor and noise-suppression. Your wallet might weep, but your photo album will sing.	R27 000 (body only) ★★★★★ BEST FOR SHOOTING LIKE THE PROS
7		Nikon D600 Pro power has never come at such a reasonable price. A full-frame 24.3MP sensor combines with accurate 39-point autofocus for stunning results. Dual SD card slots, built-in flash and 5.5fps shooting speed complete a seriously powerful proposition..	R23 000 (body only) ★★★★★
8		Canon EOS 70D The 70D is Canon's best camera in years. It's the first 'proper' DSLR to nail autofocus in videos and Live View, offers a multitude of manual controls and can take stunning pics in almost any situation. Amateurs who've outgrown the entry level should look no further.	R18 000 (w/18-135mm lens) ★★★★★ BEST FOR ADVANCED AMATEURS
9		Fujifilm X-T1 There's lots to love about this snapper, from its clever viewfinder and lightning-speed focus to the weatherproof body. One for the analogue lovers, it has actual buttons and dials with no touchscreen. The lack of in-cam image stabilisation is our only complaint.	R15 000 (body only) ★★★★★
10		Panasonic Lumix DMC-GX7 The 16MP Panasonic is a versatile beast that, while not being much of a looker, has added tricks such as a tilting EVF and a handy touchscreen LCD. It's great for smooth hi-def video recording and, with the bijou 20mm f/1.7 lens, is a great travel companion.	R12 700 (w/14-42mm lens) ★★★★★



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HOT
BUY

1



The Witcher III: The Wild Hunt PC/PS4/Xbox One

Gerald of Rivia is on his largest adventure yet and in the process of creating this vast and impressively realised open-world outing, developers CD Projekt RED have demolished the competition in RPG-land. And on TV. Described as Game of Thrones meets Dragon Age, The Witcher 3 is an easy way to lose yourself in fantasy for a month or more.

STUFF SAYS

Poland has set a new bar for RPG fans - one that will not be surpassed any time soon

from R700 ★★★★★

2



Batman: Arkham Knight PS4/Xbox One

The official ending of the Arkham trilogy is a thrill-ride of epic proportions, giving you an idea what it's like being the Bat night after night. Schedule some time off, just avoid the PC version for now.

from R800
★★★★★

3



Bloodborne PS4

You're up for a challenge, right? Right, and you don't mind dying repeatedly in aid of figuring out what to do next - Bloodborne, from the fevered brows that brought us Dark Souls, is for you. Good luck.

from R800
★★★★★

4



Far Cry 4 PC/PS3/ PS4/Xbox One/Xbox 360

Ignore how long this Himalayan adventure took to enter this list and instead pay attention to the elephants, mini-choppers and great-big-rocket-launchers that make Far Cry 4's honey-badger avoidance so much fun.

from R700
★★★★★

5



Grand Theft Auto V PC/PS3/ PS4/Xbox One/Xbox 360

Grand Theft Auto V is a cerebral shotgun blast of a game worthy of carrying on the series' mantle. The story, the sandbox and the sick leave Stuff has put in just to play more of it... not to mention how good it makes current-gen consoles look.

from R700
★★★★★

6



The Last of Us Remastered PS4

Joel and Ellie are on a journey that may or may not help the remaining people on the planet remain that way. Sneaking from clickers is a tense affair but you're here for the story and character interaction first and foremost.

from R650
★★★★★

7



Forza Horizon 2 Xbox One

This is everything an open-world driving game should be. There's loads to do and it captures the feeling of driving very fast better than any other racing game, to the point where Forza Horizon 2 could soon eclipse its older brother once and for all.

from R550
★★★★★

8



Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare PC/PS3/ PS4/Xbox One/Xbox 360

An improvement on last year's Ghosts, with some actual innovation from the series' multiplayer gameplay. We're going to be losing many, many man-hours to the Exo-powered trash-talk. Time for another support drop to come in.

from R700
★★★★★

BEST FOR
ONLINE
TEAM PLAY

9



Destiny PS4/Xbox One

This isn't for everyone, and those hoping for an epic Halo-style campaign may be disappointed. But in every other way, Destiny is on a bigger, far more multiplayer level, and with the added addictive quest for loot like Diablo - an irresistible combination.

from R750
★★★★★

10



Xenoblade Chronicles 3D Wii/New Nintendo 3DS/Wii U

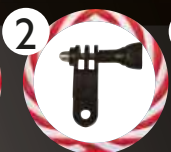
If you missed it on the Wii (most did) then you need to fix that on the New 3DS. Xenoblade Chronicles 3D will consume the spare time that you thought you had as you attempt to find out the truth about that blade. And those robotic enemies...

from R550
★★★★★

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HOT BUY 1		AKG K451 They've actually been around a little while now, but what put the K451 on-ears back on to our radar was an official price drop, and a real-world price of just R1700 or less. For that money they're unbeatable – awesomely agile and punchy sound wrapped up in a subtly stylish and foldable design. Add both standard and three-button control cables for maximising compatibility and there's practically no excuse for not getting brilliant sound from your phone.	STUFF SAYS Fantastic sound and great portability at an almost unbeatable price. The perfect PMP upgrade R1700 ★★★★★
2		Bowers & Wilkins P5 Series 2 Even the most demanding audio buff would find it hard to fault these – B&W have delivered a pair of premium on-ears that look, feel and sound exquisite. You control playback and volume with your iPhone, while feeling like a VIP guest at an intimate gig.	R5 000 ★★★★★
3		Sennheiser RS220 The specialised lossless encoding and transmission system makes these the closest we've ever come to perfect wireless sound across all music types, and despite its intimidating size, the low weight and luxuriant fit helps you forget they are there.	R7 800 ★★★★★ BEST FOR ON-EAR EXCELLENCE
4		SoundMagic E10S This is actually the third version of SoundMagic's awesome, affordable in-ears – not that you'd tell by looking. They sound even better, though: a little smoother and more refined, with tight, weighty bass. Plus there's now a mic and button for smartphone use.	R650 ★★★★★
5		Sennheiser Momentum Classily styled, cushion-comfortable and smooth-sounding, the Momentums are the perfect over-ears for the dapper man about town. There's also an on-ear version – smaller and cheaper at R2 500, available in pink, blue, green and, um, ivory/brown.	R5 450 ★★★★★ BEST FOR QUALITY AND STYLE IN ONE
6		Bose QuietComfort 25 The best kind of silence is the kind you then fill with sweet, sweet music, and that's what the QuietComfort 25s give you. The active noise-cancelling quells office hubbub, air-conditioning and aeroplane hum, and delivers cracking sound in its place.	R6 500 ★★★★★ BEST FOR SHUTTING OUT THE WORLD
7		AKG Y50 The bright colour options (they're available in yellow, teal and red, as well as black) and massive logo have a slight try-hard feel about them, but the Y50s make up for it by sounding loads better than the more 'street' on-ear headphones out there.	R1 800 ★★★★★
8		Bowers & Wilkins P3 Superb sound and a solid and achingly stylish design make these the best portable on-ears around. The fact that two cables come in the box – one with a mic and remote for iPhones, one without – only sweetens the already candyfloss-like deal.	R3 600 ★★★★★ BEST FOR ON-EAR EXCELLENCE
9		Sol Republic Master Tracks Really tough things are usually really ugly, which is why the lovely styling of the "virtually indestructible" Master Tracks headphones is so refreshing. Loud, punchy, fast and controlled, the sound is just as attractive as the design. Worth every penny.	R2 100 (import) ★★★★★
10		Sony MDR-EX650AP If you're prepared to pay a little extra for your in-ears, these Sonys are even better than the SoundMagics above. The sound is that bit bigger, a little more detailed and a little more grown-up, and if you don't like the brass finish there's a silver version.	R2 100 (import) ★★★★★



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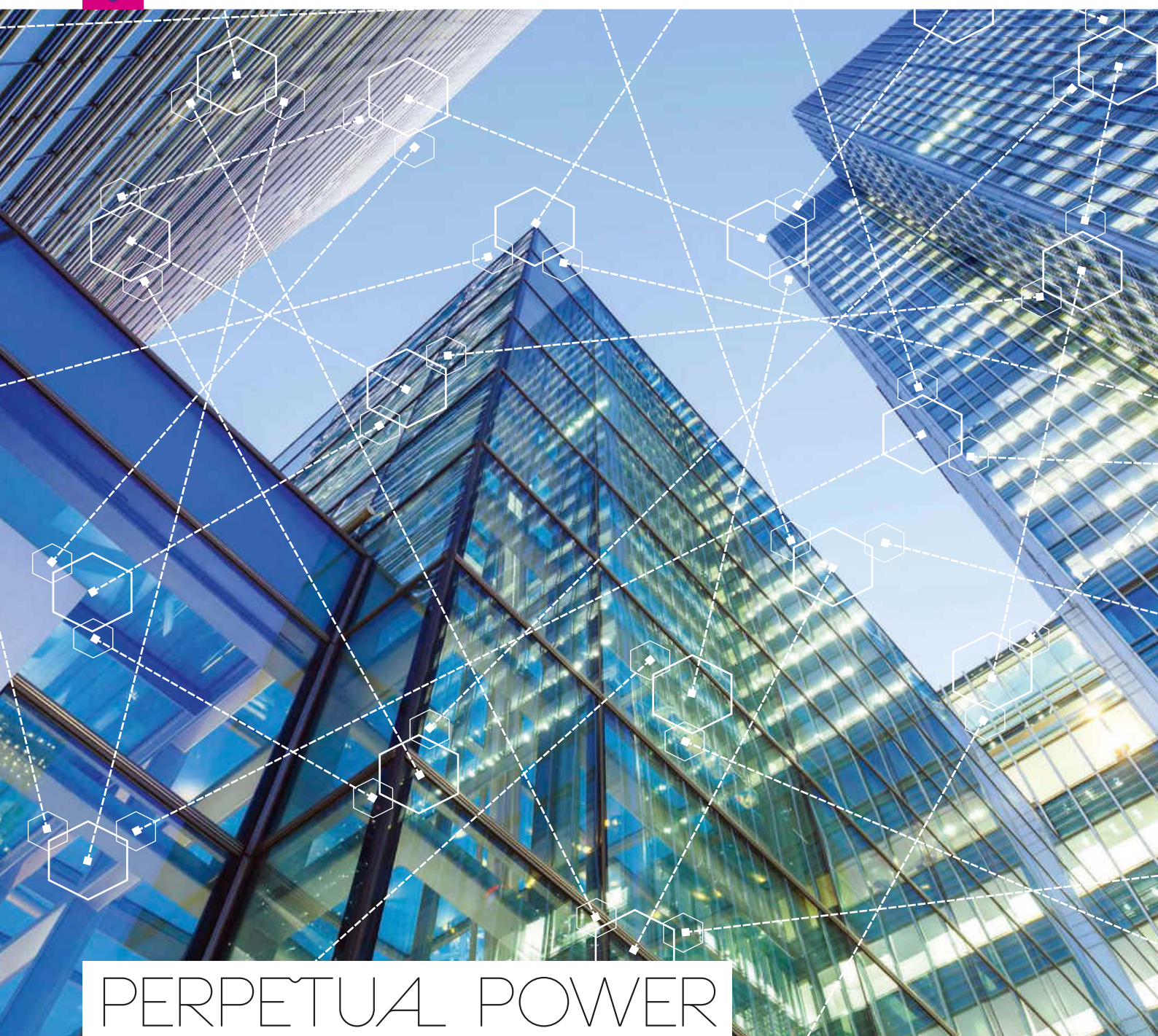
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NEXT BIG THING?



PERPETUAL POWER

Maybe they could look into getting my phone to last the day first... Poor you, walking around with a pocket-sized portal to more info than you can read in a thousand lifetimes, and it *only* lasts 12 hours. Still, if news from Drayson Technologies is to be believed, you might be able to stop worrying. Their new energy-harvesting tech apparently grabs power from thin air.

Didn't Tesla already try this (and fail)?

Nikola Tesla, that is, not Elon Musk, and sort of but not really. In the early 20th century,

the genius sparkwizard planned to broadcast wireless electricity from giant towers. Drayson's new Freevolt tech, on the other hand, makes use of the energy that's already being beamed all around us. The space around us is awash with untapped ambient power. Freevolt harvesters (which consist of an antenna, rectifier and power module) can harvest ambient RF energy from digital TV broadcasts, Wi-Fi and mobile signals. The collected power can then be used to perpetually power devices without ever having to charge them or faff around with batteries. Clever, eh?

Excellent, so my next phone will live forever?

Not quite. The power generated by the Freevolt system is minuscule, and won't be enough to power an energy-sucking smartphone. The first device to use the tech, the CleanSpace Tag (R1150, our.cleanspace) is far simpler. It's a mini sensor that measures and maps the air quality around you, and is completely powered by surrounding radio waves. This could be the first step towards potentially larger devices like watches topping themselves up over time. Fast forward to perpetually powered wearables, and we've got ourselves a game-changer.

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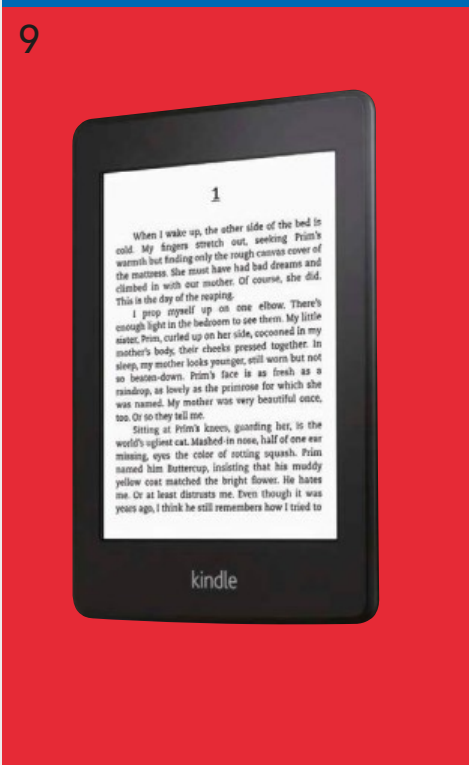


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SAMSUNG GALAXY NOTE 5

Samsung's Galaxy Note 5 takes its design cues from the S6 and S6 Edge, with a new design that ditches the microSD card slot and removable battery in favour of 32GB, 64GB and 128GB variants and a 3 000mAh battery. And an Exynos 7420 CPU. Sounds familiar...

So it's all metal and glass, with lashing of premium all over the place. Great, right? Well, mostly... You see, as gorgeous as the Note 5 looks and feels, it's lost the two items that contributed to the Note's popularity.

Speaking of popularity — key to the Note 5 is the S Pen, which Samsung says is to the Note "what the mouse is to the PC". We use trackpads at Stuff Towers, but we know what they mean. In addition to claimed improvements in precision and sensitivity, a software update to Air Command opens S Pen-related features by hovering the stylus over the screen.

R14 000 / samsung.com/za



SMARTPHONES

XIAOMI MI4

Xiaomi's handsets offer tremendous value for money — achieved by the simple expedient of using some stellar components and charging very little for the privilege. The Xiaomi Mi 4 perfectly embodies this, including everything the modern smartphone user could want in a single package.

Sounding off, there's a Snapdragon 801 processor, 3GB of RAM and 16GB of storage (there's a 64GB storage model out there as well, but we didn't get it for review) all tucked behind the 1920 x 1080 IPS LCD display, which is a lot clearer and brighter than you'd expect from a phone in this price range.

Mostly, though, it's going to be the price of the Xiaomi Mi 4 that will make it attractive. At R4 000 it would have been a must-buy even with lesser performance and a far less attractive design. There are a couple of niggles — like the lack of LTE and microSD card slot — but you'd still be silly to pass this one up. Very, very silly indeed.

R4 000 / mi.com



SAMSUNG GALAXY S6 EDGE+

Perhaps the most luxurious phone Samsung has made, with no front seams. Just a single curve of Gorilla Glass 4. It's slim, at 6.9mm, with a tiny camera bump and a fast, accurate fingerprint scanner. Not to mention the 5.7in/14.5cm QHD screen, the best Samsung has ever produced.

Samsung's Exynos 7420 runs faster and cooler than most electronic brains, resulting in an almost perfectly lag-free phone. You've got the option of 32GB or 64GB of storage, a lengthy battery thanks to software optimisation, and then there's superfast charging.

The S6 Edge+ has a pretty good claim to the phone camera crown. The 16MP rear sensor has optical image stabilisation for low light, but it's quick. Very quick. Making it fun to shoot with while image quality retains tons of detail. Now if there was only something that Samsung could do about the price...

R15 000 / samsung.com/za

LG G4

Whether you look at it from the front or the back, the LG G4 is definitely a member of the G-series family tree. Taken head-on, there's a lot of screen space. The 1440 x 2560 resolution goes a long way to make sure that you're never going to want to load anything sub-HD on this phone. Ever.

There's 32GB of storage out of the box, with a microSD slot if you want up to another 128GB of space. LG opted for Qualcomm's Snapdragon 808, a six-core sliver of silicon that no other company used for a flagship. Why the dip? No idea.

If the processor is a mite undersized, that's not a term that can be applied to the G4's camera. This can be laid at the foot of the sensor and the f/1.8 lens, which give it a slight edge over the HTC One M9 and even Samsung's S6. That and the OIS and laser autofocus. It may not hit the hat-trick but the G4 is still a solid all-rounder.

R9 000 / lg.com/za

**SONY XPERIA Z5 PREMIUM**

The world's first 4K phone is here, and it will give you pause for reflection. That might have something to do with the reflective back found on the chrome version of the Z5 Premium, which for all intents and purposes could be a mirror.

On the front, though, there's no service that will make the 5.5in/14cm, 3840 x 2160 screen break a sweat. So why would you want it? So you'll be ready when the services do arrive, of course. In the meantime, watch the 806ppi screen make short work of super high-res images.

Inside there's a Snapdragon 810, 3GB of RAM and a new 1/2.3in 23MP Exmor PS camera sensor with an f2.0 lens. Autofocus works in 0.03 secs. But if this is too much phone for you, Sony makes some smaller models in the Z5 and the Z5 compact.

Rtba / sonymobile.com

**APPLE IPHONE 6S**

At first glance, the iPhone 6s doesn't look all that different from its predecessor. Aside from the 's' on its rump and a slight weight gain that you won't notice, the 4.7in/12cm iPhone 6s is still as desirable as ever.

The more durable glass and metal makes the 6s less prone to scratches. Its new A9 processor with built-in M9 co-processor is blisteringly speedy, although Samsung's S6 is faster. It also has a new 12MP camera that captures 4K video and moving Live Photos.

Most significant of all is 3D Touch, a new gesture for iPhone using haptic feedback. You may have encountered it via Force Touch on the Watch or MacBook. It's simple, useful and oh so Apple. Long story short, the iPhone 6s takes what was already good about the iPhone 6 and refines those features. In a word? Sensational.

from R11 800 / istoreonline.co.za

WEARABLES



FITBIT SURGE

Meet the Fitbit Surge, a GPS- and touch-screen-packing sports watch that takes the features that have made Fitbit's fitness trackers so popular and adds features that let you leave your smartphone at home.

All of the standard Fitbit functions are present and accounted for: step tracking, estimated calories burnt, flights of stairs climbed, constant optical heart rate monitoring and automatic sleep tracking. Add to this GPS tracking, which allows you to track activities like running, hiking and cycling and you've got a pretty compelling proposition.

One of our favourite features of the Surge is the constant heart rate monitoring. Because it's always on, the heart rate monitoring also tracks your pulse during your sleep and uses this and your daytime measurements to calculate your resting heart rate – a solid measure of general fitness. We found ourselves trying to sneak in an extra run whenever possible and over three weeks saw our resting heart rate drop by almost 10 beats per minute. Nice.

R4 000 / fitbit.co.za

GARMIN FENIX 3

Our smartwatch priorities are a device that combines fitness tracking with smarts as an extra, which is why the Fenix 3 appeals so much. The Fenix 3 tracks loads of sports, works as a casual tracker of steps and sleep, and connects to your smartphone to relay every notification imaginable.

It can control music and sync your workouts for endless analysis on your phone, and it's got a built-in compass, along with weather, altimeter, barometer and thermometer apps. But it's still classy – you could wear it with a suit and no-one would think it was out of place.

Most of the setup is on-watch but the Garmin Connect app is needed for more advanced settings and syncing. The app's not too pretty but is great for tracking overall progress. MyFitnessPal and Stava are supported though the main app, for automatic calorie and cycle/run syncing. A rare delight.

R9 000 / capeunionmart.co.za



JAWBONE UP3

The Jawbone UP3 looks more like an understated piece of jewellery than an activity tracker. This strong showing in the aesthetic department means sacrifices have had to be made elsewhere.

Cramming heart-rate tracking, step counts and the best app we've encountered in a long while seems like a good idea – and it is – but the UP3 faces stiff competition that can do what it does and more. Most importantly, the UP3 can be outdone but having the Smart Coach makes up for a lot of its faults.

Firmware updates introduced automatic sleep tracking and improved accuracy across the board, but won't fix the lack of display. The UP3 is pretty, but it's far too pedestrian for its price. The UP2 offers far better value for money, though if you're looking for something good-looking with an HR monitor, the UP3 is at your service.

R2 400 / quantifi.co.za



SAMSUNG GEAR S2

This could be the smartwatch that makes you love smartwatches again. Specifically, Samsung smartwatches. The Tizen-powered smartwatch eschews Android Wear for the company's own solution. It also eschews looking like a smartwatch for looking like a watch-watch. As it were.

The 1.2in/3cm Super AMOLED is the only sort of screen you're going to want to see on your wrist in future and the turning bezel is actually useful. You can navigate menus and the like, zoom on maps, and other Apple Watch digital crown-like things.

Expect improved battery life from the Gear S2, even if you're springing for the 3G version of the smartwatch. Samsung has thrown everything (minus GPS, which would have hammered that battery life) at the S2, so you've got another choice for your HR monitor. You'll still have your work cut out choosing just one smart piece of wristwear but if you're using an Android 4.4 or better phone with at least 1.5GB of RAM, you're in.

Rtba / samsung.com/za

PEBBLE TIME

Hate the idea of charging your watch every day? Relax, there's none of that here. The Pebble Time lasts a week, though four days is more likely if you're using it properly. That's still a lot longer than most of the other options out there: Android Wear or WatchOS. Just saying.

Thanks to a slightly curved back and flexible strap, the Pebble is very comfy – and it's just terrifically easy to live with. That's down to the battery life, which is made possible by the low-energy 1.26in/3.2cm, 144x168 screen. This is an LCD but not as we know it.

The face is toughened glass surrounded by stainless steel. It's less attention-grabbing than most smartwatches, and it's on 24/7. There's also a light that turns on when you flick your wrist, so you can see the screen at night. It's not flashy, but we like that – a lot.

R2 800 / getpebble.com



APPLE WATCH

Apple was serious about making this gadget personal. As well as two case sizes (38mm and 42mm) there are three metal finishes and a series of straps from the colourful, practical sports band to a traditional buckle or link bracelet.

The Retina display looks great, with rich details and bright colours in every corner. The Sapphire Crystal also feels solid and robust. It's well-balanced and lighter

than you might think. Apple's Watch is smarter than the average smartwatch, with a deep, involving interface. Notifications and much more are at your fingertips thanks to its battery of sensors.

The Watch is more luxurious than other smartwatches but it's also a platform that will attract more app builders than Pebble or Android Wear. It's impressive as hell out of the gates, but the future of the Apple Watch looks even more amazing.

from R5 900 / Istoreonline.co.za

GOPRO HERO4 SESSION

Oh to be in the design process for this one. One person being carted out after insisting that this GoPro could be 50% smaller and 40% lighter as long as the camera bits remained unscathed and then let back once everyone realised it could actually be done. We like to think that's the genesis of this form factor.

The Session's advantages go beyond just being smaller than other models. It's waterproof, without a case, which is convenient and has a great effect on audio quality. And they've managed to keep it compatible with all of your old GoPro accessories.

There's also a new low-profile mounting option, but the battery can't be removed. It also lacks the 4K options of the Hero4 Black but the 1440p/30fps and WVGA/120fps features, Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, LCD display and microSD slot should make up for that.

R5900 /
dionwired.co.za



DJI PHANTOM 3 PROFESSIONAL

Here it is, the Phantom 3 Professional, DJI's flying machine with a 4K camera and so many smarts that a ten-thumbed 10-year-old couldn't crash it. We're almost exaggerating, but it really is incredibly easy to use: 10 minutes in and the Phantom 3 Pro is cruising the skies like we know what we're doing.

Even with the Phantom 3 200 metres away, we can view a live

feed, using a tablet, the drone's remote control and the free DJI Pilot app to send it where we want. If we want it to move up to 2km away, then so be it. Assuming that's legal, anyway.

The Phantom 3 can record up to 4K, takes 12MP stills and

uses a clever three-axis gimbal to keep that camera steady. It also offers a wealth of data to pilots, from altitude and position to gyroscopic info. The drone to get if you're going to be filming... anything.

R22000 /
droneworld.co.za



GADGETS



LOTUS GRILL

It's summer and you know what that means. Mosquitoes, sunscreen, beer and all the meat you can turn to charcoal while drinking the beer. But it's no fun smelling like you took a bath in firelighters and burnt trees so the Lotus Grill is a welcome visitor.

The Lotus Grill keeps your charcoal in a central container, which reduces smoke while radiating heat, which helps you to cook the food you're

preparing. There's a knock-on effect: less dripping fat to char meat and there's a built-in fan to help you quickly reach the correct cooking temperature.

The lack of a flame might feel strange but the consolation prize is meat that might just be edible without having to consume all the beer first. Which means that you'll have a pleasant meal to go with the sundowners. And the mozzies.

R2500 /
yuppiechef.co.za

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HISENSE 55K390PAD

Hisense may not have the same celebrity status as LG or Samsung, but it makes excellent, value-for-money TVs. While this 55" display is aimed at the budget conscious it has all of the features we've come to expect from an internet-connected TV and comes with an impressive four-year warranty. For added piece of mind, Hisense offers top-notch after-sales support in South Africa, something that's rare outside of the big name brands. This affordability means you can get a larger screen from Hisense for the same money you'd spend on a significantly smaller one from its rivals. Because when it comes to TVs size really does matter.

R10 500 / hisense.co.za

TECH SPECS

55in/139cm ● 1920x1080 ●
HDMI x 4, USB x 3, Wi-Fi,
Ethernet ● 190x116x41cm

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★☆

**LG 42LB652T**

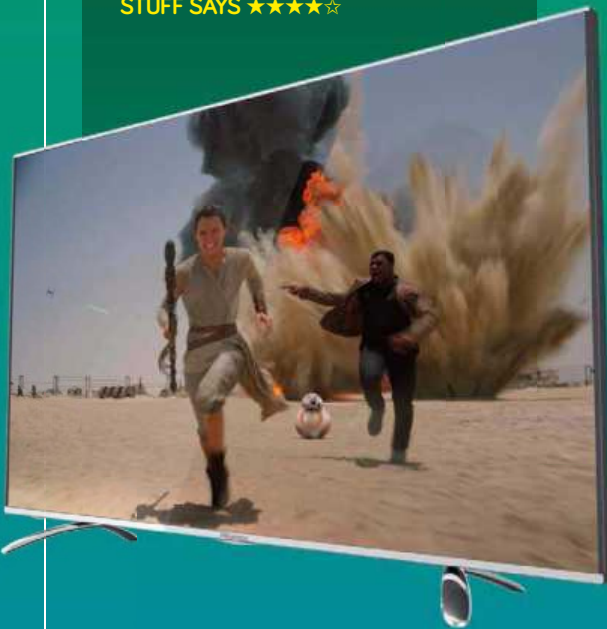
LG's webOS on a budget, 42-inches of HD and 3D features that you're never going to use (not more than a few times, anyway), that's what you're getting from the LG 42LB652T. Who on earth names these things, anyway? It's a short jump from an entry-level LED to a smart TV but it's still a significant one. You'll want to plump for the extra features if you can afford them but that's for later. All the smart functions in the world won't matter when you're glued to the screen watching that display work its magic on you.

R8 400 / lg.com/za

TECH SPECS

42in/107cm 1920x1080 ● HDMI x 3,
USB x 3, Wi-Fi, Ethernet ● 96x61x22cm

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★☆

**SAMSUNG 65JS9000**

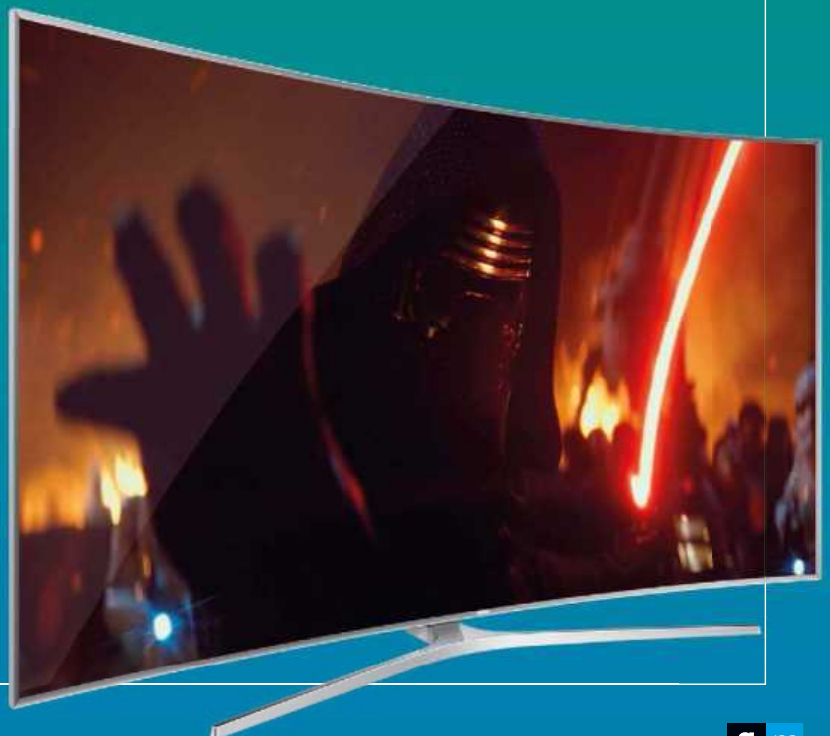
This is undoubtedly the TV to get if money is no object. From its attention-grabbing curve to its compact and elegant remote, everything about this display says "I cost my owner a whole whack of cash". Samsung always has to be a little bit different, and its flagship 65" curved 4K display is no exception with its proprietary nanocrystal technology and its plug-in box that moves the plethora of connection options – including a slew of HDMI, optical connections and USB ports – out of sight, and also means you'll never have to remove it from a wall mount to connect a new toy to it.

R70 000 / samsung.co.za

TECH SPECS

65in/165cm 3840x2160 ● Curved ● 3D ● HDMI x 4,
USB x 3, Wi-Fi, Ethernet ● 146x91x36cm

STUFF SAYS ★★★★★



STUFF



2015 AUDI R8 COUPE

We get that the Audi R8 Coupe is a performance vehicle first and foremost but what can you expect, technology-wise, from a car that uses a body called an Audi Space Frame, features weight reduction, aerodynamics tech and aluminium high-torque long-stroke engines?

Er... everything, really. A 6.5in/16.5cm touchscreen navigation hub with enough support for DVD, SDHC, Bluetooth, Aux (if you're into that) that also provides driving info is just the start. Optional sound by Bang & Olufsen, two sorts of parking assist – depending on how much money you're willing to part with – and every assist you never knew existed – including automatic braking on incline starts (read the manual) – are available in the R8 Coupe.

That's not counting the engineered accident protection, airbags – heck – even a custom-designed luggage system designed to fit inside the R8 Coupe are yours for the buying. Plus, it's fast, rocketing you to the ton in less than five seconds.

from R1.66 million / audi.co.za

2015 BMW X6 M SPORT ACTIVITY

It's extremely hard indeed for a driver (or prospective passenger) to be sad when in close proximity to BMW's SUV king. Why? Because it accelerates to 100km/h as quickly as Audi's R8 Coupe, which is not bad for a three-ton vehicle.

The X6 M comes with all the torque you'd expect of an M-branded vehicle and enough power to lift even Clarkson's eyebrows – so there's your reason right there. Luxury, speed and power in a very chunky package is all good and well, but where can we connect the iPad? In the USB port, of course, and you'll be able to take control of audio apps with the steering wheel controls.

Navigation, DVDs and even an optional TV tuner can be used or watched from the centre console's 8.8in/22.3cm touchscreen display. Bluetooth connectivity is, as you'd expect, standard, too. BMW's ConnectedDrive tech is in place, as is BMW's driver-side HUD tech and there's the Laptimer app...

from R1.58 million / bmw.co.za



2014 MAZDA3

The 2014 Mazda3 is a stylish yet cheap hatchback that combines sweeping lines with Mazda's SKYACTIV engine tech. You care about that last point because it means consumption of 6.1l/100km. Mazda's design chops are on show, making the 3 look like you paid more for it than you actually did, but it's what's on the inside that counts.

In this case, it's Mazda's MZD Connect infotainment system, which lives in a centre dash-mounted 7in/17.8cm LCD touchscreen. Your more mundane activities – like accessing a smartphone's music library over Bluetooth – are covered, but the Mazda3 also makes use of your data connection to furnish passengers (or extremely suicidal drivers) with social media access.

Then there's the Active Driving Display, a pop-up readout above the speedo which gives you pertinent information without making you glance down. Short of your car watching the road for you, this is one way to turn driving into a much safer activity.

from R233 000 / mazda.co.za



NINEBOT ONE E+

What's cooler than an electric bicycle? An electric unicycle, of course! Well, considering it doesn't have a saddle and you don't need to be able to juggle to ride one, perhaps "electric monowheel" is more accurate. Whatever you want to call it, the Ninebot One E+ is the latest and greatest thing in personal transportation, guaranteed to get strangers gawking as you whizz past them at speeds of up to 22km/h.

Weighing in at a touch over 14kg it's a good thing the One E+ has a range of 20–25km on a single charge, because you don't want to carrying it home should you run out of charge mid-commute. An accompanying app for Android and iOS lets you set the patterns and colours of the rings of LEDs housed on each side of the unit, and its modular design means replacing parts is fairly simple.

It's either way cooler than a Segway or infinitely more ridiculous. We can't decide which, but we can tell you it's incredibly fun to ride once you get the hang of it.

from R12 000 / imperialgreen.co.za

**HOVERBOARD**

Misleadingly called "hoverboards", these two-wheeled, self-balancing, electric scooters are popping up in music videos and parks all over the world. A separate motor for each wheel and its desire to stay upright makes riding a hoverboard as easy as riding a Segway — albeit one without handlebars.

Shift your weight forward to accelerate up to 10km/h, shift it backwards to slow down or go backwards, and tilt one foot or the other forwards or backwards to turn. Thanks to its gyroscopic smarts, you'll be spinning on the spot almost as soon as you've powered it up.

Also, if you're a rapper itching for a run-in with airport security, we recommend riding one of these through Los Angeles airport. If, on the other hand, you like your fun without cable ties around your wrists, we recommend sticking to the pavements, streets and pathways of South Africa.

from R7 000 / e-board.co.za

VESPA 946 EMPORIO ARMANI

Ah, 1946, the year the League of Nations was dissolved and Italy not only abolished its monarchy but made the first Vespa scooter. Fast forward 69 years and Vespa's still making its iconic two-wheelers. Its latest is a limited edition, retro-styled beauty developed in conjunction with another Italian icon, Giorgio Armani.

As is Armani's way, the 946 has an understated colour palette of brown leather details, matt grey metallic bits and a dark grey body with hints of green should you happen to park it somewhere sunny for passersby to ogle and, potentially, drool over.

But this is not your granddad's Vespa, unless your granddad was a time traveler with a penchant for electronics who managed to get his iPhone to connect to his scooter. The 946 also boasts electronic riding controls, ABS brakes and 12-inch wheels for added stability and control on the mean streets of Mzansi. Ciao bella, indeed.

from R140 000 / vespa.co.za



ON THE MOVE

AUDIO



SONOS PLAY:1

Sonos knows a thing or two about making a wireless speaker look good, and the Play:1 is one of its best achievements. It packs premium materials that make it look and feel great and a clean, modern design that will work in any room.

Sonos has had time to refine its system. Setup over Wi-Fi via the app is a breeze, and creating a stereo pair is just a few taps away. And loads of music services are supported.

A recent firmware tuneup from Sonos took the Play:1 up a notch. Sound quality is still rich and detailed, with plenty in the low end, but now delivers a touch more midrange clarity, even at volume. It's well balanced, with a good spread and great stereo. About the only drawback is that you're going to need to get a second Play:1 to truly enjoy its stereo skills. With a Z. **R3 400 (each) / audiocoonline.co.za**

BOWERS & WILKINS T7

When a manufacturer of esteemed hi-fi pedigree makes a small affordable thing, you take notice. The T7 is B&W's first portable Bluetooth speaker and it's lovely. The honeycomb frame looks like the sort of thing Darth Vader might keep evil bees in but this 'micro matrix' creates a solid, resonance-free structure.

The rubbery edges give it some degree of protection, but don't go rock-climbing with it. As for the features, the T7 isn't a Swiss army knife. You get aptX Bluetooth and a 3.5mm headphone input and that's about it.

Quality is extraordinary for a speaker of this size and type. It's a natural, balanced performance: vocals are clear and open, backed by solid bass that gets your heels tapping. Loud with little effort and with battery power to match performance, the T7 is a serious winner.

R5 500 / audiocoonline.co.za



BRAVEN BRV-HD OUTDOOR SPEAKER

The BRV-HD pretty closely resembles a brick, both in dimensions and weight. It's one of the heftiest portable speakers we've tested, largely due to its 8800mAh battery. In addition to allowing for up to 28 hours of playback time, the battery can also be used to charge devices like smartphones, tablets and compact cameras via the built-in USB port.

This could prove handy when out and about, but we'd be disinclined to lug the BRV-HD around more than necessary — it's probably not going to make it into your backpack for a hike. Aside from its weight, the only complaint we can level at the Braven BRV-HD is its price. At R4 000 it's not excessive, but it's definitely in the upper range of speakers in its class.

Nonetheless, there's far more to like about and recommend the BRV-HD than to dislike or count against it. It's a well-made, good-looking, excellent-sounding beast of a speaker that should survive a fair amount of roughhousing.

R4 000 (each) / above-beyond.co.za



The future of wearables
never looked this good.

SAMSUNG Gear S2



Intuitive design meets enhanced functionality.

With a simple glance at your wrist, you can monitor your heart rate, listen to music, check emails and notifications. Then, when you need to change modes, the Gear S2 obliges, changing from classic to sport with a few clicks on the rotary bezel. The result is a smartwatch that helps you manage your lifestyle.

Samsung - A way of life.



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*Subject to availability. Colour and size range may vary according to the network carrier.

SAMSUNG



LEICA M MONOCHROM

There's a longstanding joke about Leica, namely that the Leica man (or woman) doesn't ask what it costs. The Leica shooter also doesn't get bogged down with specifications, they simply get out there and capture flawless images. The Leica M Monochrom takes the best features of the Leica M, drops the colour and ups the specs.

That's right, as you should've guessed from the name, the Monochrom only shoots in black and white. This means there's no need for a

colour filter in front of the sensor, allowing more light to hit the sensor. The result? Pin sharp pictures even in low-light conditions, with ISO sensitivity of up to 25 000.

Images are captured using a 24-megapixel, full-frame sensor, and can be saved in JPG or RAW file formats. Add a 3in/7.6cm LCD display protected by sapphire glass and Leica's traditional, minimalist controls and you get not just an outstanding image-capturing tool, but a potential heirloom. We Leica a lot.

from **R132 000 / ormsdirect.co.za**



CANON EOS 5DS

Remember the bar-setting 5D Mark III? The camera every Canon shooter wanted in their bag when it first launched? Well, if you thought it was good, wait until you meet the 5DS. There's a full-frame 50.6-megapixel sensor (up from the 22.3-megapixel sensor of the Mark III), 1080p video capture at 30fps, a built-in time-lapse feature, lightning-fast autofocus and a 3.2in/8.1cm display.

It's so smart there's even a new mechanism to reduce the shake introduced by the mirror flipping out of the way when an image is captured, and users can opt to delay the actual capture until the impact of the camera's mirror has been fully diffused. Very fancy.

And, if you're coming from a crop sensor, you can even use the 5DS in a 1.3x or 1.6x crop mode to get the benefits of extended range with telephoto lenses or, you know, just indulge in some photographic nostalgia.

Rtba / canon.co.za

NIKON COOLPIX AW130

If you're the adventurous sort, or just accident prone, the Nikon Coolpix AW130 was designed with you in mind. We're guessing the AW part either stands for "all weather" or "always works", because the AW130 is waterproof, shockproof, and dust and cold-resistant. Behind the reinforced and hardy shell, you'll find a 16-megapixel CMOS sensor, capable of shooting full HD video.

With built-in GPS, GLONASS, and QZSS, along with a compass and world map, mean you'll always know where you took a picture, or where you are if your phone runs flat. And an altimeter and depth gauge add even more info to your holiday snaps. Meanwhile, built-in Wi-Fi and NFC make getting your masterpieces off the camera and onto social media a cinch.

Using the Android or iOS apps you can even trigger the camera remotely, making it that much easier to get the perfect pose with a manta ray. Available in blue, orange, black, yellow or camo you can even match the AW130 to your scuba gear.

R4 400 / nikon.co.za



THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

Everyone's favourite witcher returns and in this open-world instalment it feels as though Geralt has got the game he deserves. You'll feel the freedom of the massive open-world setting, but it's also evident in every other aspect that's been expanded, evolved and tweaked.

As ever, Geralt is the star. He's tracking down his surrogate daughter Ciri but Ciri is also being tracked by the Wild

Hunt — a bunch of skeletal chaps with a penchant for murder and ice. But there's also a war-torn country to explore (literally), populated with monsters, soldiers and civilians in need of a witcher's unique talents.

Combat is tough but players have skills, potions and gear to work with, as well as Geralt's investigative senses — frequently the best part of *The Witcher 3* is tracking your quarry. And the story. Definitely the story.

PC, PS4, Xbox One



BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

Tearing through Gotham in several tonnes of transforming tank that runs through concrete like it's wet cardboard is more than just fun. Bruce Wayne's alter ego uses the Batmobile to launch higher, cross the city faster and remotely solve puzzles.

Batman isn't without his other gadgets, all of which are as useful, if not quite as extravagant as the Batmobile. And he's going to need all of them,

as well as all the help he can get from friends and... others in his fight against the Scarecrow, who has stepped up his game, and the mysterious Arkham Knight.

Arkham Knight transitions between stealth, beat-em-up, vehicular violence and puzzler seamlessly, every element seeming carefully made. The plot is notable too, this is some of the best storytelling we've seen. This game isn't just brawn; it has some serious brains to match.

PC, PS4, Xbox One

GAMES



UNTIL DAWN

Combining the biggest clichés from horror films with the largest gaming clichés, *Until Dawn* is somehow far better than it should be. Scarier too.

The interactive fiction of *Until Dawn* isn't what you'd call fresh, combining stereotypical story and characters with the quick time event, that most hated of game mechanics. And yet, it works. You'll find yourself trying to keep the annoying teenage cast alive, in spite of yourself in some instances, but you'll be extremely lucky if everyone makes it to dawn. Most will perish, horribly and graphically, as you come up against a range of threats.

Until Dawn can become repetitive but it also plays expertly with some of the best horror movie traditions. Unlike a film, the roller coaster will take around nine hours and your first impulse will be to get on it again, to see how differently things can turn out if you just make one little alteration...

PS4



SAMSUNG GALAXY TAB S2 9.7

The Galaxy Tab S2 is light and thin, a mere 5.6mm thick, with the 9.7-inch version weighing in at 389g. Sammy have taken down the screen res this time around, to 2048 x 1536 (the Tab S used a res of 2560 x 1600), so you can expect visuals to take a slight knock but it's packing an Exynos 533 octa-core chip that should give it a performance edge other the last model.

There are both Wi-Fi and Wi-Fi/LTE models in the offing. Elsewhere, the Tab S2 comes with 3GB of RAM, 8MP rear/2MP front cameras – we were expecting better here – and 32/64GB storage options with microSD support (up to that tasty 128GB augmentation).

Android Lollipop will be installed from the get-go and the 9.7-inch tab will also be packing a 5870mAh battery. Samsung took a few steps forward here and a couple back but the result is still a pleasingly versatile Android slate.

from R9 200 / takealot.com

TABLETS



MICROSOFT SURFACE 3

You're probably thinking of the Surface Pro 3. Stop it. This is the Surface 3, a thinner, lighter tablet that runs proper Windows. Previous editions of the Surface used the scaled-down Windows RT OS, which stopped them from running the more impressive applications. That's out – Windows 10 on a tablet can be yours.

We like the design, with a multi-position kickstand, USB 3.0

ports and those pricey Type Covers standing out. The latter will make the Surface 3 act like a laptop though, a feature that the 10.8in/27.5cm 1080p display, 64GB/128GB storage and Atom X7-z8700 processor will support with aplomb.

As for the rest of the design, we are fond of the web-friendly 3:2 aspect, the squarer shape and then there's the optional Surface Pen...

R11000 / takealot.com



APPLE IPAD MINI 4

We didn't get a new iPad Air but we did get the Mini 4. Apple's fantastic 7.9-inch, 1536 x 2048 Retina display with that lovely 326ppi density count looks just as good as it did the last time we saw it. Is it going to be an upgrade factor? Er... no.

The Mini 4 measures 6.1mm thick, starting at 298grams for the Wi-Fi only version and going all the way up to 304grams for the cellular option. Some day Apple's going to whip the covering cloth off what looks like a sheet of paper.

Then things veer off wildly enough to make you sit up and take notice. If you skipped the iPad Air 2 last year then you can get a smaller version this year. The iPad Mini 3's A7 processor isn't going to be getting any faster, while you're looking at comparable performance to the iPad Air 2 in this year's iPad Mini 4. Upgrade time? Upgrade time.

from R7 000 / istoreonline.co.za



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LIVE IN HD ON SUPERSPORT**

ULED TV

ULTIMATE Response Time | Contrast | Brightness



CURVED TV

TV's differ in terms of features and specifications which ultimately impacts picture quality and price. Hisense has just released its Ultra LED (ULED) TV range, which includes ultra-high-definition models. ULED, an enhanced version of LED TV technology, divides the backlight into 240 independently controlled zones, which enhances contrast to create a more vivid colour experience. Its ultra-dimming technology enables it to render more detailed imagery. Hisense's ULED 2.0 technology can finally fulfil your desire for the best picture quality, colour and ultimate viewing experience.

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